# CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

TUESDAY ▸ FEBRUARY 10, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 207 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

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Iran Refuses Giving Up Uranium Enrichment Talks P8

India-US Trade Deal Opens Vast American Export Market P9

P11 Real Madrid edge Valencia to stay on Barca's tail, Atletico slump

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SIR STORM IN TOP COURT

# Won't allow any impediment to SIR process: SC to states

SC extended deadline for Bengal's final electoral roll under SIR by a week, issued a show-cause notice to the top cop, and directed more time for hearings.

**NEW DELHI**

As the SIR battle heats up in West Bengal, the Supreme Court on Monday cautioned the Mamata Banerjee government against creating any "impediments" in the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls process in the poll-bound state, even as it assured that genuine difficulties in the process would be addressed.

The warning came as the court heard the Election Commission's (EC) response to a petition filed by West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee challenging the SIR exercise in the state.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant made the court's position clear, stating, "Whatever orders or clarification required, we will issue. But we will not allow any impediment to the SIR process. This must be understood by all states." The bench also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and NV Anjaria emphasised that the revision exercise must proceed as scheduled. The top court also extended the deadline for SIR in West Bengal by one more week, from February 14.

**Whatever orders or clarification required, we will issue. But we will not allow any impediment to the SIR process. This must be understood by all states.**

—Surya Kant, CJI

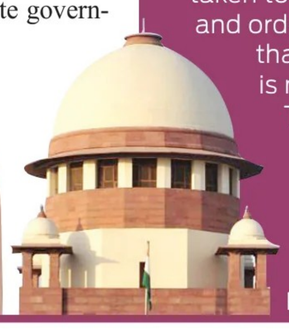
At the heart of the dispute is the EC's SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal, an exercise that the state government has questioned. Banerjee has approached the court alleging irregularities in the process and questioning the deployment of thousands of micro-observers in the state.

The EC, in turn, has defended its actions and accused the state government of failing to cooperate fully with its requests.

During the hearing, the CJI remarked that 8,500 officers have now been deployed in connection with the exercise. "If done earlier, it would probably get approved," he said, in what appeared to be a reference to the timing of compliance by the state government.

A central point of contention in the case has been the deployment of micro-observers in West Bengal. The EC told the court that it had written five letters to the Bengal government specifying the officers it required. "They have not given," it said, explaining why micro-observers were deployed.

"On February 4, Banerjee appeared along with her counsels. There was an objection raised on the deployment of micro observers by the ECI, and it was stated by ECI that despite repeated requests, adequate manpower was not provided by the state government.



**BENGAL DGP GETS SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE FROM SC**

The Supreme Court also issued a show-cause notice to the Director General of Police (DGP), West Bengal, in response to reports submitted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding widespread threats and violence directed at officials performing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) duties in the state. The bench directed the top cop to file an affidavit explaining the steps taken to maintain law and order and ensure that the process is not disrupted. The Court has also passed directions in order to streamline the ongoing process of SIR.

# Manipur's Ukhrul tense after night of arson

**IMPHAL**

Fresh violence erupted in Litan Sareikhong of Manipur's Ukhrul district after clashes between the Tangkhul Naga and Kuki communities. Armed militants allegedly torched over 20 houses, trigering panic in the area.

The unrest reportedly began after an alleged assault on a Tangkhul Naga man, which escalated into stone-pelting, arson and sporadic firing in and around Litan Sareikhong village.

The office of the District Magistrate, Ukhrul, imposed prohibitory orders restricting movement and activities in Litan village with effect from 7 pm on Sunday until further orders. Security forces were deployed in large numbers and tear gas was used to disperse mobs as officials worked to restore order.

The situation remains tense, with police and paramilitary forces maintaining a high alert in the district.

## POWER TUSSLE: DKS TO SKIP PRE-BUDGET MEETING WITH CM?

**BENGALURU:** Amidst the ongoing speculation over power-sharing in the Congress, DyCM DK Shivakumar announced on Monday his plan to go to Delhi, which will result in his absence from the pre-budget meeting for his water resources and Bengaluru Urban Development portfolios. This meeting is scheduled to be led by CM Siddaramaiah, who concurrently serves as the finance minister. Shivakumar is set to depart for Delhi on Tuesday morning and the CM is slated to hold the pre-budget meeting for two of Shivakumar's departments the same day.

# B'luru techie killed in Canada shooting

**BENGALURU**

A man from Nelamangala in Bengaluru Rural district, who was working in Canada, was shot dead in a gun attack. The victim, identified as Chandan Kumar (37), was driving his car near Woodbine Mall in Toronto when he was attacked by unknown assailants.

Chandan's family, who are residents of Thyamagondlu village in Nelamangala, are shocked and grieving his sudden demise. Chandan had been working in Canada for the past six years and was employed with L&T company. He was a talented and educated person who was passionate about spreading Kannada language and culture in Canada.

The police in Canada informed Chandan's parents about the incident, but due to language barriers, it took some time to convey the news to them. Chandan's father, Nandakumar, a retired teacher, expressed his shock and grief, saying that he had been planning to get Chandan married soon. He appealed to the government to help bring Chandan's body back to India.

# FIR filed over ex-Army chief's pre-print book leak; special cell to probe

**NEW DELHI**

The Delhi police have registered an FIR over the circulation of an unpublished book of former Chief of Army Staff Gen M M Naravane on social media, an official statement said Monday.

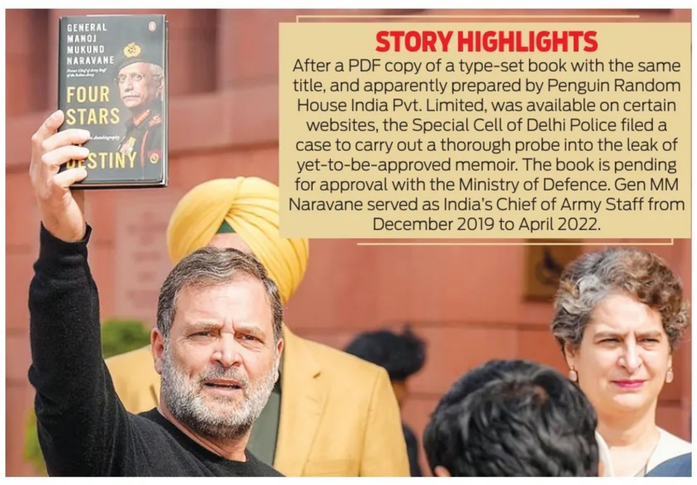
"The Delhi police have taken cognisance of information circulating on social media platforms and online news forums claiming that a pre-print copy of a book titled 'Four Stars of Destiny' is being circulated without mandatory clearance from competent authorities," the statement said.

According to the police statement, it was also reported that the necessary clearance for publication of this book is yet to be received from the relevant authorities.

"Upon verification, it was found that a PDF copy of a type-set book with the same title and apparently prepared by M/s Penguin Random House India Pvt Ltd is available on certain websites and, also, some online marketing platforms have displayed the finished book cover as if it is available for purchase," it read.

The police said a case has been registered with the Special Cell in order to carry out a thorough investigation into this purported leak or breach of a yet-to-be-approved publication and an investigation is being taken up.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen flashing a purported copy of the book in the Parliament complex last week. The matter has generated immense heat with the proceedings of the Lok Sabha getting disrupted and eight MPs getting suspended over the issue for the remaining part of the ongoing Budget session.




**STORY HIGHLIGHTS**

After a PDF copy of a type-set book with the same title, and apparently prepared by Penguin Random House India Pvt. Limited, was available on certain websites, the Special Cell of Delhi Police filed a case to carry out a thorough probe into the leak of yet-to-be-approved memoir. The book is pending for approval with the Ministry of Defence. Gen MM Naravane served as India's Chief of Army Staff from December 2019 to April 2022.

## PM skipped LS fearing Naravane book issue, not security: Rahul

He dared those claiming that there was a threat to the PM to 'file an FIR'

**NEW DELHI**

Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not come to the Lok Sabha to reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address because he was "scared" of issues raised by the opposition, particularly references to former Army chief MM Naravane's book.

Rejecting claims that there was a security threat to the Prime Minister from MPs, Gandhi challenged those making the allegation to act. "If somebody has said that he is going to attack the PM. Please do an FIR, arrest that person. Why you are not doing that!" he said.

"There is no question of that. The fact is very clear the prime minister was scared to come to the House not because of the members but because of what I was saying and he is still scared because he cannot face the truth," Gandhi told reporters.

He insisted that there was "no question of the Congress members attacking the prime minister" and said Modi should have had the courage to face the House.

"He was scared of what we say, he was scared of being handed Naravane's book as a first step," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader also claimed the government was avoiding a wider debate on the Budget. "My guess is government is worried about having a debate on the Budget because the issue of the US deal, the way it was done, its impact on our farmers, is going to be discussed and the government does not want to do that," he said.

# Cong ups ante against Birla; collects signatures for his removal

**'WAIT FOR THE ACTION': CONG MULLS NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AGAINST LS SPEAKER**

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress on Monday claimed that there "is no space for Opposition" in the Lok Sabha and responded to reports that the Opposition may move a motion of no confidence against Speaker Om Birla, saying "wait for action". Congress MP KC Venugopal alleged that LoP Rahul Gandhi and other Opposition leader are not being allowed to air their views in the Lower House, while the government side can state whatever they want and even make "derogatory remarks" against the opposition member. Asked about reports that Opposition may move motion of no confidence against Birla, he said, "You see what is happening in Parliament. You can see in this session, the LoP is not being allowed to speak."

PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA

# *Don't let tech enslave you: Modi to students*

**NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said students should not let technology enslave them, but use it to increase their potential.

In the second episode of Pariksha Pe Charcha, he noted that mobile phones have become masters of some children, who cannot even eat food without them or without a television screen.

"It means that you have become slaves of mobiles. You have to make a firm resolve that you will not let technology enslave you," Modi said in an interaction with students that took place in Coimbatore, Raipur, Guwahati and Gujarat. The PM urged students not to be afraid of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, but use them to hone their skills and improve potential.

"We should try not to make AI or mobile the master; some kids do not eat food unless they see the smartphone. We can use AI efficiently," he said.

He urged students to practice previous papers and have a good sleep to perform better at examinations.

"You will never feel tense after preparing well for exams. A good night's sleep will keep you cheerful for the rest of the day," Modi said.

Recalling his teachers' influence, Modi highlighted exercise, guidance from elders, and effective communication as key traits of leadership beyond electoral politics.

## 'Delhi will become Khalistan': 15 schools get bomb threats

**NEW DELHI**

More than a dozen schools across Delhi on Monday received bomb threat emails. which prompted heavy security deployment and precautionary evacuations. Of these, eight threats were later declared hoaxes, officials informed. The threatening email carried provocative and disturbing content, claiming, "Delhi will become Khalistan. Punjab is Khalistan. In memory of Afzal Guru."

Te email alleged that a blast would take place inside Parliament on February 13 at 1.11 pm, prompting heightened security alerts and coordination among multiple agencies. According to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), emergency calls were received from multiple educational institutions across different parts of the city.

QUICK READ

### NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar hospitalised in Pune

**PUNE:** Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar (85) was admitted to a hospital here on Monday afternoon after he complained of throat-related problems, coughing and fever. The senior leader was brought to the city from his residence in Maharashtra's Baramati for advanced medical care. He was unwell while in Baramati and initially took primary treatment there.

### Khamenei breaks 37-yr-old ritual amid US attack threat

**TEHRAN**

Amid rising US military buildup in the Gulf, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has reportedly broken his 37-year-old tradition by missing the annual February 8 meet with air force commanders. Khamenei has attended the annual meeting every year since assuming leadership in 1989-- even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting marks the anniversary of February 8, 1979, when a group of air force officers pledged allegiance to Ruhollah Khomeini to overthrow the Pahlavi dynasty.

### 'Absolute robbery': SC on siphoning of over Rs 54K cr

**NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Monday described the siphoning of over Rs 54,000 crore by digital frauds as absolute "robbery or dacoity" and asked the Centre to draft a standard operating procedure in consultation with stakeholders like the RBI, banks and the Department of Telecommunications to deal with such cases. A bench comprising CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria observed that the amount siphoned off by digital fraud is more than the budgets of many small states.

QUICK READ

## BMTC bus with brake failure collides with auto, two-wheelers

**Bengaluru**

A BMTC bus allegedly suffered brake failure and rammed into an auto-rickshaw and two two-wheelers in Bengaluru. The incident occurred when the bus, operating from Kamalanagar to Majestic, lost control after the driver applied the brakes near a traffic signal in the Vijayanagara area. The vehicles were reportedly stationary on the opposite side of the signal when the collision took place. Fortunately, no casualties were reported, police said. The accident was captured on CCTV cameras installed in the area. The Vijayanagara Traffic Police have registered a suo motu case and are investigating the incident.

## PG medical options registration extended till Feb 10: KEA

**Bengaluru**

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has extended the deadline for submitting options for the third round of seat allocation for admission to PG medical courses till 8 am on February 10. KEA Administrative Officer Islavuddin Gadyal said the provisional seat allocation will be announced at 5 pm on February 10, while the final results will be declared after 1 pm on February 11. Candidates allotted seats must pay the fee and download the admit card between February 12 and 13, and report to their respective colleges by February 14.

## Five arrested in jewellery shop robbery case

**Bengaluru**

Police have arrested five persons in connection with a jewellery shop robbery in the Madanayakanahalli area of Bengaluru. The accused allegedly entered the shop posing as customers interested in buying gold jewellery and later threatened the shop owner at gunpoint. They robbed gold ornaments and ₹50,000 in cash before fleeing the scene. Acting on leads, the Madanayakanahalli police registered a case and apprehended the suspects. Police recovered 9.1 grams of gold ornaments, a pistol, a two-wheeler and a mobile phone from the accused. The arrested persons have been remanded to judicial custody, and further investigation is underway.

# Extend shelf life of fruits, speed up trials: Chouhan

### Scientists urged to develop new fruit varieties and spread technology for farmers' income growth

**BENGALURU**

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday called on agricultural scientists to prioritise extending the shelf life of fruits and vegetables and to fast-track trials of new crop varieties, saying both steps are vital to increasing farmers' incomes and reducing post-harvest losses.

During his visit to the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) in Bengaluru, Chouhan reviewed newly developed horticultural varieties and interacted with heads of several city-based institutes functioning under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR). He said horticulture must play a larger role in doubling farm incomes, particularly by reducing wastage and improving market access.

"Along with grains, farmers should integrate fruits and vegetables with allied activities such as dairy, fisheries and beekeeping. Integrated farming models must be strengthened to ensure stable and diversified income," the minister said.

Scientists informed him that a newly developed crop variety typically takes around six years to reach farmers due to mandatory multi-location field trials. Chouhan urged researchers and regulatory agencies to work together to compress this timeline to about three years without compromising scientific rigour or safety.

"Our aim is to reduce dependence on imports of fruits and vegetables. We are already becoming self-reliant in certain crops like dragon fruit," he said, adding that researchers should also assess market demand before recommending crops to farmers. Varieties with better commercial potential and longer shelf life should be prioritised, he noted.

The minister proposed organising a national-level brainstorming meet on horticulture in Bengaluru, bringing together scientists, extension workers and farmers from across the country. The proposed meet would focus on practical challenges such as disease management, post-harvest handling, extension services and market linkages.

During interactions with farmers and agri-entrepreneurs, Manikanta, a tuberose grower from Doddaballapur taluk, requested wider availability of the IIHR-developed Arka Prajwal variety, which yields flowers throughout the year and helps stabilise incomes. Varun Kashyap, founder of a startup working on precision beehives, sought government support to create a structured value chain for beekeeping on the lines of the dairy sector, saying it would benefit small and marginal farmers.

IIHR officials briefed Chouhan on ongoing work in developing climate-resilient crop varieties, post-harvest technologies and disease control strategies. The minister assured continued central support for research initiatives that directly benefit farmers and consumers by improving quality, cutting losses and enhancing overall farm profitability.

# Music speaks as words fail, NIMHANS turns rhythm into stroke rehabilitation tool

**BENGALURU**

When words falter and movement slows after a stroke, rhythm and melody are offering patients a new pathway to recovery. Neuropsychologists at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) are increasingly using music-based interventions as part of evidence-driven neuro-rehabilitation, helping stroke survivors regain lost cognitive, speech and motor functions.

At NIMHANS' Music Cognition Lab, specialists work with at least 10 stroke patients every month, integrating music into therapy to stimulate damaged neural networks. Dr Shantala Hegde, Professor and Consultant Neuropsychologist at NIMHANS, along with PhD scholars Preeti Kodancha and Shreyas Krishnakumar, has been leading this work for the past few years.

"These are not recreational sessions. We rely on neuroscience-backed, evidence-based

> "In neuropsychological rehabilitation, I use music very differently. I break it down into its fundamental components and use those building blocks to enhance core cognitive functions such as attention, memory, planning, decision-making and response inhibition," said Dr Shantala Hegde.

tools," Dr Shantala said. The music used is universal rather than culture-specific, and often very simple — a metronome, rhythmic counting like "1-2-3-4", structured rhythm patterns, syllables or short phrases. "The goal is to activate intact regions of the brain so they can compensate for areas damaged by stroke," she explained.

One such beneficiary is VS, a 42-year-old human resources professional from Bengaluru. With a medical history that included systemic lupus erythematosus and congestive heart failure, she suffered a left middle cerebral artery ischaemic stroke at the age of 37. After prolonged hospitalisation, she was unable to walk or speak and showed signs of post-stroke depression.

Nearly three years later, in April 2024, VS approached NIMHANS with persistent communication and cognitive difficulties. Detailed neuropsychological assessments revealed impairments in expressive and written language, verbal fluency, working memory, response inhibition, verbal learning, arithmetic skills and logical sequencing of ideas.

Alongside conventional therapies, psychologists introduced neurologic music therapy techniques to improve engagement and aid recovery. Rhythm-based exercises were used to support speech, motor coordination and higher cognitive functions. Over time, VS showed significant improvement in expressive speech, basic arithmetic, work-related engagement and independence in daily activities.

"Music is one of the highest forms of cognitive function, yet it is often dismissed as merely cultural or recreational," Dr Shantala noted. "In rehabilitation, it can be a powerful clinical tool."

Experts at NIMHANS believe such approaches hold promise not only for stroke, but also for other neurological conditions affecting cognition and communication.

# POWER CUT IN MANY AREAS ON FEBRUARY 10, 11

**BENGALURU**

Power supply will be disrupted in several parts of the city on February 10 and 11 due to scheduled maintenance works, electricity supply officials said. Consumers have been advised to make necessary arrangements in advance and cooperate with the authorities during the shutdown period.

On Tuesday, power supply will be interrupted from 10 am to 5 pm in areas including BWSSB STP, Jakkasandra, Teachers Colony, HSR Layout 5th Sector, parts of Venkatapura, Greenage Apartments, Koramangala Extension, Chennakeshava Nagar, Hosa Road, Singasandra, Hongasandra, AECS Layout A and B Block, Huskur, Naganathapura, Koodlu, Muneshwara Layout, Doddanagamangala, Parappana Agrahara, Chikkathogur, Bellandur-2, Mahaveer Ranches Apartment, IBM and IBM D Block, Jakkasandra Extension and 1st Block, along with surrounding localities.

On Tuesday, between 10 am and 4 pm, power disruption is expected in Kaveri Nagar, Hulimavu, Akshaya Nagar, Hongasandra, BTS Layout, Kodichikkanahalli, Electronics City Phase-2, Veersandra, Doddanagamangala, Chokkasandra, IBM, Guruppanapalya, Sobha Morzaria Apartments, BG Road, BTM 1st Stage, Madiwala, Maruthi Nagar, Bismillah Nagar and nearby areas.

On Wednesday, from 10 am to 4 pm, areas such as Laxmi Layout, Southcity Apartments, Kammanahalli, Shanthinikethana School, Electronics City Phase-1, Doddathogur, Bommanahalli, NJR Layout, Chikkathogur, Hongasandra and Konnappana Agrahara will be affected.

Additionally, on Wednesday from 10 am to 5 pm, power supply will be disrupted in Koramangala, including Netravathi, Godavari and Kapila Blocks, Jyothinivas College, ST Bed, Judicial Block, KML Village, Raheja Tower, Prestige Star Tech Park, Koramangala Industrial Area, Madiwala, Adugodi, SG Palya, St John's Hospital area, BTM and adjoining localities.

Residents have been urged to bear with the inconvenience.

## FIR against daughter for sharing mother's photos

**BENGALURU**

The Byatarayanapura police have registered an FIR against a young woman and her boyfriend for allegedly taking and sharing private photographs of her mother and grandmother without consent. The case was filed on a complaint by a 49-year-old woman, who said her elder daughter, a BBM student, secretly captured the images and sent them to her boyfriend, identified as Varun. The complainant discovered the photos after checking her daughter's phone, which was given for educational use. Messages allegedly showed repeated demands for such images. Though deleted, the woman feared circulation. Police are examining digital evidence.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) can revolutionise the film production process in production houses

Multimodel AI will do data integration of images, videos, voice, texts and other data required to create intuitive interactions in every field. India produces approximately 1800 to 2000 movies annually, accounting for 10 percent of the total number of projects initiated. The production cost for a film is estimated at around INR 100 crores, with a significant portion going to the leading actors. Successful films can achieve a worldwide gross of approximately 1800 crores. However, many projects are discontinued at various stages, resulting in unprofitable investments. Furthermore, the percentage of films that fail at the cinema is high across all languages and genres in India.

AI Transformation

AI can transform the entertainment industry by providing advanced customisation. It can create screenplays and suggest directors, cinematographers and production controllers based on AI-generated ratings and the script's nature. Casting can also be automated by analysing character roles and actor availability. Online contracts with actors provide data to AI, enabling it to schedule scenes based on their availability without human intervention. AI can access data from travel bookings and accommodation, incorporating locations into the schedule accordingly.

Digital Customisation

This is how AI can assist in the entire film production process. However, it will take the industry to a new level of total digital customisation. The initial stage will involve a film with no human actors. Each character will be portrayed by an AI clone of a real actor. The entire shooting budget will be eliminated, and audiences will perceive the film as featuring real actors, although they are not. Contract obligations for using the clones will be minimal compared to current remuneration.

Viewer-driven Customisation

The next level will be viewer-driven customisation. Theatres will provide AI-powered smart glasses or film glasses with an independent sound system connected via headphones. The platform will allow the public to select the language and based on this selection; actors and the language will change for each viewer. This will enable viewers to watch movies acted by actors in their own language. Traditionally it is done by separate shooting and dubbing.

Total change in Entertainment industry

The highest level is total digital customisation by the public. An OTT platform will provide access to select actors in any language with language selection. This will enable greater customisation as the same character is acted by multiple actors. Viewers can also choose who should act in a live performance. A fan of an actor can make him act in all the movies listed on the platform when he watches.

Public will be the superstar in the clone era, Rajesh Khanna may come as new romantic hero. New songs may from the voice of Mohammad Rafi and Lataji.

Dr VR Sreerengan, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru.

## Woman dies after thieves spray chemical, snatch necklace

**BENGALURU**

A 45-year-old woman died after collapsing when miscreants allegedly sprayed a chemical on her while attempting to steal her gold necklace in Huskuru village near Nelamangala on Monday morning. The deceased has been identified as Jyoti. According to the police, the incident occurred while she was sweeping the area in front of her house. Two unidentified men on a motorcycle approached her and sprayed a chemical substance on her face, causing her to collapse instantly. The assailants then snatched a 70-gram mangalya necklace from her neck and fled the spot.

Jyoti was immediately rushed to a private hospital in

Nelamangala, where doctors declared her brought dead. Her body has been shifted to Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru for a post-mortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death. Officers from the Madanayakanahalli police station visited the spot and conducted an inspection. A case has been registered, and police have launched a search operation, examining CCTV footage in the surrounding areas to trace the accused and determine the substance used in the attack.

DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTS

# *Human–wildlife conflicts: Linear policy to be rolled out*

**BENGALURU**

With incidents of human–wildlife conflict rising across the country, the Union government is preparing to roll out a renewed linear infrastructure policy aimed at balancing development needs with ecological protection in forest and wildlife landscapes. The updated framework is expected to streamline the clearance and execution of projects such as highways, railways and transmission lines, while strengthening safeguards for wildlife movement and habitat continuity. Speaking on the sidelines of the second Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) workshop for International Big Cat Alli-

ance (IBCA) member countries, Soumitra Dasgupta, Director (Programme), IBCA, said the revised policy would provide a more integrated approach to infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive areas. "The idea is not to stall development, but to align it better with conservation priorities," he said, adding that the renewed framework would help reduce conflicts triggered by poorly planned linear projects cutting through forests.

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is currently preparing the revised policy, which will lay down clearer norms for mitigation measures in protected areas and wildlife corridors. Dasgupta cited successful examples such as the elevated wildlife corridor through the Pench Tiger Reserve and the tunnel constructed across the Mukundra Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. Interim studies by scientists monitoring these sites indicate that animals are gradually adapting to such structures, using them to cross barriers created by roads and rail lines, IBCA officials said.

The officials noted that the need for a robust policy is particularly acute in the northeastern and peninsular regions, where rapid infrastructure expansion has intensified human–wildlife interactions. Encroachments, habitat fragmentation and increased traffic through forested areas have led to a spike in conflicts involving elephants, big cats and other wildlife.

IBCA representatives also highlighted Karnataka's efforts to address conflict through a combination of mitigation and compensation. The State offers one of the highest compensation packages in the country for crop damage, livestock loss and human casualties caused by wildlife. "Bringing local communities on board is critical. Compensation, quick response systems and community participation play a major role in reducing hostility towards conservation," an official said.

## QUICK READ

### Strict Punishment Inevitable for Those Who Assault Police

**DAVANAGERE**

Chairperson of the Karnataka State Women's Commission Nagalakshmi Choudhary on Monday asserted that strict punishment is inevitable for anyone who assaults police personnel, stressing that attacks on law enforcers will not be tolerated under any circumstances. She was speaking to the media at Rajanhalli, where she reviewed recent incidents and interacted with local officials. Nagalakshmi Choudhary said police personnel perform their duties under challenging conditions to ensure public safety and uphold the rule of law. An attack on the police is an attack on the justice system itself. Such acts will invite uncompromising legal action, she said, adding that the government is committed to protecting officers discharging their duties.

### Hassan and Be'luru Clinch Titles at State-Level Netball Tournament

**DAVANAGERE**

The State-Level Netball Tournament concluded on a high note in Davanagere, with teams from Hassan and Bengaluru securing first place in their respective categories. The tournament witnessed enthusiastic participation from teams across the state and showcased high-quality competitive netball. Players displayed impressive skill, coordination, and sportsmanship throughout the matches, drawing appreciation from spectators and officials alike. The Hassan team delivered a strong and consistent performance, dominating their fixtures and clinching the title after an intense final match. Similarly, the Bengaluru team demonstrated tactical brilliance and teamwork to emerge victorious in their category.

### Grand Hindu Sammelana and Procession Held

**KUMBARAWADA**

A Hindu Sammelana was organised at Kumbarawada, marked by a grand and vibrant procession that attracted a large number of devotees and local residents. The event was held in a peaceful and enthusiastic atmosphere, reflecting cultural pride and community unity. The Sammelana began with a ceremonial procession that passed through the main streets of Kumbarawada. Participants carried religious flags, portraits of revered figures, and symbols associated with Hindu traditions. Devotional songs, drum beats, and traditional music added to the festive spirit, while devotees chanted slogans expressing faith and unity.

# Fruit, Honey and Mushroom Exhibition-Cum-Sale to Be Held

A five-day exhibition-cum-sale promoting direct farmer-to-consumer marketing will be held in Koppal from February 12

**KOPPAL**

In connection with Maha Shivaratri, the Department of Horticulture, Koppal, will organise a Fruit, Honey and Mushroom Exhibition and Sale Fair–2026 from February 12 to February 16 at the office premises of the Joint Director of Horticulture in Koppal. The fair aims to promote direct marketing from farmers to consumers and encourage the farming community by eliminating middlemen.

The exhibition-cum-sale will feature a wide range of horticultural produce including grapes, pomegranate, guava, fig, watermelon, muskmelon, banana, papaya, jackfruit, honey, and mushrooms. The inaugural ceremony will be held on February 12 at 10.30 am. The fair will be inaugurated by Thangadagi Shivaraj Sangappa, Minister for Backward Classes Welfare and Kannada and Culture, and District Incharge Minister of Koppal. Horticulture and Mines & Geology Minister S. S. Mallikarjun, along with Basavaraj Rayareddy, Chief Minister's Economic Advisor, and Doddangouda Hanamagouda Patil, will be present as special guests.The programme will be presided over by K. Raghavendra Hitnal, who is also President of the Raichur–Ballari–Koppal District Cooperative Milk Union. Among the chief guests will be K. Rajashekar Basavaraj Hitnal, Gangavathi MLA G. Janardhana Reddy, and several Members of the Legislative Council. Senior officials and special invitees include K. P. Mohanraj, Koppal District Incharge Secretary, R. Girish, Secretary to Government (Horticulture and Sericulture), Dr. Suresh B. Itnal, Varnit Negi, and Dr. Ram L. Arasiddi. As part of the fair, a technical workshop on beekeeping will also be organised. The session will be conducted by traditional medicine practitioner and honey farming expert Dr. Madhukeshwar G. Hegde, providing valuable insights to farmers and entrepreneurs. Several Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) from across Koppal district will participate in the exhibition, offering fresh produce directly to consumers.

The fair is expected to benefit both farmers and the public by ensuring quality produce at reasonable prices.

# Child Safety Awareness Programme Organised for ASHA Workers

**GANGAVATHI**

**ASHA workers were trained on child rights, laws, and safety to prevent child marriage in Koppal district.**

An awareness programme on child rights, child protection laws, and child safety was organised for ASHA workers of Gangavathi taluk in Koppal district. The programme was jointly conducted by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Women and Child Development Department, Health and Family Welfare Department, and the District Child Protection Unit, Koppal.

Inaugurating the programme, District Child Protection Officer Mahantaswamy Pujari highlighted the serious concern of child marriage in the district. Citing data from the National Family Health Survey, he said the child marriage rate in Koppal district stands at 27.1 percent. Though the number has shown a declining trend over the past year, instances of child marriage are still occurring without coming to the notice of authorities.

He stressed that creating sustained and effective awareness at the community level is essential to make Koppal a child-marriage-free district. ASHA workers, who also serve as member secretaries of village-level child protection committees, were urged to actively spread awareness on child rights, laws, and safety measures. By strengthening the capacity of ASHA workers, we aim to empower communities and prevent child marriages at the grassroots level, he said.

Presiding over the programme, Gangavathi Taluk Medical Officer Dr. Gowrishankar spoke about the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. He explained that if parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to care for a child, the child should not be abandoned. Instead, such cases can be reported through the child helpline 1098 or directly to the District Child Welfare Committee, which will ensure rehabilitation in a family environment as per the law.

Dr. Gowrishankar also cautioned that illegal adoption is a punishable offence. He said both those who give and receive children for adoption outside the legal framework can face legal action. He appealed to ASHA workers to spread awareness in communities to ensure a safe and protective environment for children.

Several officials participated in the programme, including Taluk Health and Education Officer Asha Begum, Community Health Officers Durgesh and Shobha B Jali, Legal-cum-Probation Officer Shivaleela Vannur, and Child Protection Officers Prashant Reddy and Ravikumar Pawar.

*After days of disruprtion over demands of opposition parties after a meeting of floor parties after a meeting after a meeting after a meeting*

# Moka Malleshwara Swamy Rathotsava Held with Grandeur

**BALLARI**

The annual Rathotsava of Moka Malleshwara Swamy Temple was celebrated in a grand and devotional manner in Ballari, witnessing the participation of a large number of devotees. The chariot festival was held amidst traditional rituals, chanting of hymns, and an atmosphere filled with spiritual fervour.

Devotees from Ballari city and surrounding villages gathered in huge numbers to witness the Rathotsava of Moka Malleshwara Swamy, considered a revered deity by the local population. The beautifully decorated chariot carrying the deity was pulled through the main streets, accompanied by drum beats, devotional songs, and offerings by devotees.

Temple priests performed special pujas and rituals before the commencement of the Rathotsava. The deity was adorned with flowers, ornaments, and traditional attire, adding to the visual splendour of the event. As the chariot moved forward, devotees offered coconuts, fruits, and prayers, seeking blessings for prosperity, health, and well-being.

The Rathotsava passed peacefully with the cooperation of devotees and the support of volunteers and authorities. Adequate arrangements were made for crowd management, security, and medical assistance to ensure the safety and convenience of the public. Police personnel and volunteers were deployed along the procession route to maintain order.

Elders and temple committee members said the Rathotsava is an important annual event that reflects the cultural and religious heritage of the region. This festival brings people together and strengthens faith and unity among devotees, a committee member said.

Many devotees described the occasion as spiritually uplifting and expressed happiness at being able to participate in the traditional celebration. For several families, attending the Rathotsava has been a long-standing tradition passed down through generations.

The festival concluded with special aarti and prasada distribution at the temple premises. The successful conduct of the Rathotsava added to the festive spirit in Ballari, leaving devotees with a sense of devotion and fulfillment.

# SP Yashoda Personally Leads Sticker Awareness Drive for Vehicles

**HAVERI**

In an effort to strengthen public awareness and encourage responsible behaviour on roads, District Superintendent of Police Yashoda personally carried out a sticker awareness campaign by pasting informative stickers on vehicles. The initiative was aimed at directly engaging with motorists and spreading key messages related to traffic discipline, safety, and law enforcement.

The campaign was conducted at prominent locations in the city, where SP Yashoda interacted with drivers of two-wheelers, cars, and other vehicles. By personally affixing stickers, she conveyed the importance of following traffic rules, wearing helmets and seat belts, and avoiding rash and negligent driving. The stickers carried safety-related messages intended to serve as constant reminders for vehicle users.

Speaking on the occasion, SP Yashoda said awareness is as important as enforcement when it comes to road safety. Many accidents occur due to negligence and lack of awareness.

# Congress Worker Vishweshwarayya Hiremath from Gurubagond Joins BJP

**HAVERI**

In a significant political development, Vishweshwarayya Hiremath from Gurubagond village formally resigned from the Indian National Congress and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party at the BJP district office in the city on Monday.

The joining ceremony was held in the presence of senior BJP leaders and party workers, who welcomed Vishweshwarayya Hiremath into the party by offering the BJP scarf. Leaders said his induction would strengthen the party's organisational base at the grassroots level, especially in rural areas like Gurubagond.

Speaking on the occasion, Vishweshwarayya Hiremath said he decided to quit the Congress after becoming disillusioned with its functioning and leadership at the local level. He alleged that genuine workers were being sidelined and that there was a lack of clarity and direction within the party. I felt that my efforts and commitment were not being recognised. After careful thought, I decided to join the BJP, which I believe offers a clear vision for development and good governance, he said.

BJP leaders present at the event said that the party's policies, leadership, and focus on development have attracted workers from other parties. They expressed confidence that Vishweshwarayya Hiremath's experience and local influence would help the BJP connect more effectively with people at the village level.

Addressing party workers, senior BJP functionaries said such defections reflect growing public support for the BJP's ideology and governance model. People who have worked on the ground understand which party truly focuses on development and public welfare. That is why many are choosing to join the BJP, a leader remarked.

Party leaders also urged new members to actively participate in organisational activities and work towards strengthening the party ahead of upcoming political challenges. They emphasized discipline, commitment, and service to the people as core values of the BJP. Several BJP leaders, local office-bearers, and supporters were present during the programme.

# Social Audit Meeting Held

**HAVERI**

A Social Audit meeting was held on February 9, 2026, in Haveri, with the objective of reviewing the implementation of government welfare schemes and ensuring transparency and accountability at the grassroots level. The meeting witnessed participation from officials, representatives of social audit units, local body members, and members of the public.

During the meeting, details of various development works and welfare programmes implemented in the region were presented and discussed. Officials explained expenditure details, work progress, and beneficiary coverage, while citizens were given an opportunity to raise questions, point out irregularities, and share feedback based on ground realities.

Representatives of the Social Audit Unit emphasized that social audits play a crucial role in strengthening democratic governance by enabling people to directly monitor public schemes. They stated that such meetings help identify gaps in implementation, prevent misuse of funds, and improve service delivery. Public participation is the backbone of social audits. Honest feedback helps the administration correct mistakes and improve efficiency, an official said. Local residents raised concerns related to delays in works, quality of construction, and beneficiary selection in certain schemes. Officials responded to the issues raised and assured that corrective measures would be taken wherever lapses are found. Instructions were also issued to concerned departments to submit reports and take follow-up action on the observations made during the audit.

Officials reiterated that social audit meetings are not meant to find fault but to improve transparency and accountability in governance.

**INDIA POST SERVICES**

# *India Post Extends Booking Hours and Launches Digital Services*

**KOPPAL**

The India Post has announced the extension of booking facilities and the introduction of multiple digital initiatives to enhance convenience for the public. The new measures have been implemented in three phases and are aimed at making postal services more accessible and user-friendly, according to an official release issued by the Koppal Postal Division.

As part of the first initiative, India Post has extended the booking time for Speed Post, letters, and parcels. Customers can now book postal articles up to 30 minutes before the closing time of post offices at all departmental post offices. This facility applies on working days and includes domestic Speed Post, parcels, as well as international Speed Post and parcel services. Officials said this move will greatly benefit customers who reach post offices towards the end of working hours, ensuring they are not turned away due to time constraints.

The second initiative focuses on promoting digital convenience through the Customer Self Service Portal. By visiting the portal, users can book letters and parcels online, track consignments, lodge complaints, and access detailed information about postal services without visiting a post office. India Post has encouraged citizens to make use of this online platform to save time and effort while availing postal services from their homes.

The third initiative is the launch of the Dak Seva App, a mobile application designed to provide postal services directly on smartphones. Through the app, users can book postal items, track shipments, register complaints, and obtain service-related information easily. The app is intended to simplify access to postal services and enhance the overall customer experience. A QR code for downloading the app is available on the official India Post website.

The Divisional Superintendent of Posts, Koppal, has urged the public to make full use of these extended and digital services. He said these initiatives reflect India Post's commitment to modernisation and customer-centric service delivery.

For additional details or assistance, citizens have been advised to contact their nearest post office. India Post reiterated that these changes are aimed at ensuring better accessibility, efficiency, and satisfaction for all postal service users.

## QUICK READ

### Another Arrest in Belagavi Hidden Camera Case, Probe Widens

**BELAGAVI**

The investigation into the alleged hidden camera and blackmail case in Belagavi has taken a new turn with the arrest of another officer, intensifying scrutiny on those involved. Police said the accused had allegedly placed concealed cameras inside the residence of a woman officer and recorded private moments, leading to a serious breach of privacy. According to the police, as many as eight hidden cameras were reportedly installed in different holders inside the house to secretly capture private footage of the woman officer. With the latest arrest, the number of people taken into custody in connection with the case has increased. Earlier, three accused had already been arrested, and now another woman associated with the officer's workplace has also been taken into custody as part of the expanding investigation.

### Woman Killed in Road Accident on Chikkodi–Belagavi Road

**BELAGAVI**

A tragic road accident claimed the life of a woman on the Chikkodi–Belagavi road near Aminbhavi village, under the limits of Sankeshwar Police Station, on Monday. The incident has once again raised concerns over road safety on busy state highways in the region. According to police sources, the deceased has been identified as Suvarna Mallappa Mone (37). She was travelling as a pillion rider on a motorcycle when the accident occurred. While the two-wheeler was proceeding along the Chikkodi–Belagavi road, Suvarna reportedly lost balance and fell onto the road. Tragically, she came under the rear wheel of a bus that was moving on the same stretch of road and died on the spot due to severe injuries.

### Belagavi Man Survives on Leaves and Greens for a Decade

**BELAGAVI**

In a rare and intriguing case that has drawn attention from both medical experts and the general public, Budan Khan Hosamani (34) from Belagavi district has reportedly been surviving exclusively on leaves and greens for the past ten years. His unusual lifestyle and dietary habits have left doctors puzzled and sparked widespread curiosity. Budan Khan Hosamani is a resident of Heggolle Hill in Ugaragolla, located in Savadatti. According to local residents, Budan Khan consumes only various types of leaves, wild greens, and forest vegetation, completely avoiding cooked food, grains, fruits, and meat. Despite this restrictive diet, he is said to be physically active and free from any major health complaints.

# Cong Took Opinions Before Giving Me Ticket: Limbikai

Congress candidate Limbikai said his ticket was finalised after wide consultations within the party, in the city

**HUBBALLI**

Congress candidate for the West Graduates Constituency Limbikai on Monday stated that his candidature was finalised only after the party collected opinions from various leaders and stakeholders. Addressing party workers and supporters in the city, Limbikai asserted that the decision reflected the democratic functioning and internal consultation process of the Congress party.

Speaking to the media, Limbikai said the party leadership held discussions at multiple levels before announcing his name as the candidate. The Congress party sought opinions from senior leaders, grassroots workers, and representatives connected to the graduates' constituency. Only after evaluating these views was the ticket given to me, he said. He added that this process strengthened his responsibility towards the party and the voters.

Limbikai, who is contesting as a candidate of the Indian National Congress, expressed confidence that the party's ideology and developmental agenda would receive strong support from graduates. He said the graduates' constituency has a large number of educated voters who understand issues related to employment, education, governance, and social justice. Graduates are aware and thoughtful voters. I will raise their concerns effectively if elected, he said.

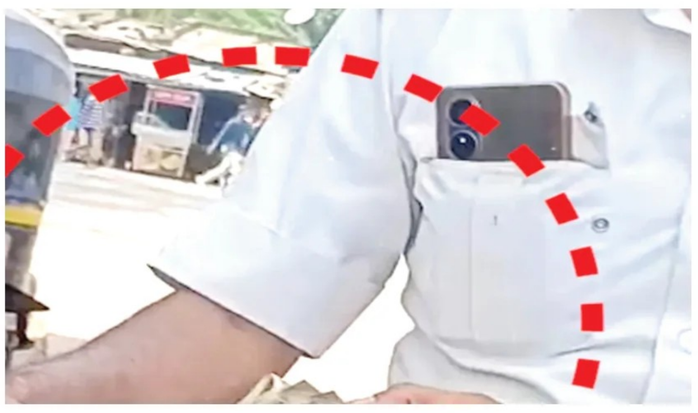
The Congress candidate said his campaign would focus on issues such as better employment opportunities for educated youth, strengthening higher education institutions, transparency in governance, and protecting democratic values.

He also emphasized the need to address challenges faced by teachers, professionals, and self-employed graduates. According to him, these sections play a vital role in shaping society and policy.

Limbikai thanked party workers for their support and urged them to work collectively to ensure victory. He said unity within the party would be the key factor in the election. The Congress has always believed in inclusive politics. When everyone works together, success is certain, he remarked.

Reacting to questions about opposition candidates, Limbikai said he was not interested in personal attacks and would instead focus on presenting constructive ideas to voters. This election should be about issues, not individuals. I am confident that people will choose a candidate who listens to them and represents their aspirations, he said.

Senior Congress leaders present at the meeting expressed confidence in Limbikai's leadership and experience. They said his selection was based on his public service record and acceptance among party workers. Leaders appealed to graduates across the constituency to support the Congress candidate for a stronger and more accountable representation.



# Viral Bribery Video Puts Hubballi-Dharwad Police Under Scanner

**A viral video allegedly showing a traffic policeman accepting a bribe has sparked public outrage in Hubballi.**

**HUBBALLI**

A fresh controversy has erupted in Hubballi after a video allegedly showing a traffic policeman accepting a bribe of ₹500 from a bike rider went viral on social media, raising serious questions about accountability within the police department. The incident, reported near New English School in Hubballi, has drawn sharp criticism from the public and put the Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissionerate under intense scrutiny.

According to the widely circulated video, a traffic policeman is seen accepting ₹500 from a motorcyclist after allegedly warning him that the traffic violation could attract a fine of ₹6,000. The video further suggests that the money was collected on the instructions of an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), adding another layer of seriousness to the allegations. The clip has been shared extensively across social media platforms, triggering outrage among citizens and social activists.

The development has embarrassed the police department, which has often spoken about reforms, transparency, and the use of technology to curb corruption. Ironically, the incident has occurred at a time when the Hubballi-Dharwad police commissionerate has been projecting itself as a model for efficient policing. Critics say such incidents severely damage public trust and undo the credibility built over years.

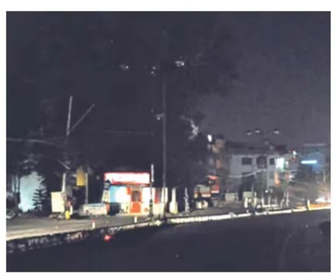
Residents and commuters expressed anger over the episode, stating that corruption at the street level directly affects common citizens. People are already burdened by fines and rules. When policemen themselves misuse their authority, it completely erodes faith in the system, said a local resident. Several citizens demanded immediate suspension of the personnel involved and a transparent inquiry.

The video has also caught the attention of civil society groups, who have urged senior officials and the Home Department to take swift and strict action. They stressed that such acts should not be treated as isolated incidents but as symptoms of a deeper systemic issue that needs to be addressed decisively.

Sources within the police department said that senior officers are aware of the video and that an internal inquiry is likely to be initiated. However, no official statement had been released at the time of filing this report. The silence has further fueled speculation and criticism, with many questioning the seriousness of the authorities in dealing with corruption allegations.

# Residents Live in Darkness as Streetlights Remain Defunct

**HUBBALLI**



Residents of Desai Lane and Dhora Gali in Ward No. 70 of the Hubballi Municipal Corporation are facing serious hardships due to non-functional streetlights, which have left the entire area in darkness for nearly a month. The prolonged outage has caused fear, inconvenience, and growing anger among local residents, who say repeated complaints have gone unanswered.

According to locals, streetlights in Desai Lane and Dhora Gali stopped working several weeks ago and have not been repaired despite multiple representations to the corporator and civic officials. As a result, residents claim they are forced to live in complete darkness after sunset, making daily movement risky, especially for women, children, and elderly citizens.

The situation has become frightening. People are scared to step out at night, said a resident of Desai Lane. Locals stated that poor visibility has increased the risk of accidents, snake bites, and street crimes. Two-wheeler riders and pedestrians are particularly vulnerable due to uneven roads and open drains that are difficult to notice in the dark.

Residents further alleged that the lack of lighting has created an atmosphere conducive to anti-social activities. Dark streets invite trouble. We constantly fear thefts and other criminal acts, said another resident from Dhora Gali. The fear of crime has reportedly forced many families to restrict movement after evening hours, severely affecting daily life.

Despite several requests made to local corporators and officials of the Hubballi Municipal Corporation, residents say no concrete action has been taken so far. They claim assurances were given during initial complaints, but repair work has yet to begin. This delay has led to frustration and disappointment among the public.

Social activists in the area have criticized the civic body for negligence, stating that street lighting is a basic civic amenity and cannot be ignored.

They argued that prompt maintenance of streetlights is essential for public safety and quality of life. If authorities cannot ensure basic infrastructure like lighting, it reflects poorly on urban governance, an activist remarked.

# Two-Wheeler Stolen From Ulavi Fair in Mattigatti Village

**KUNDGOL**

A two-wheeler parked at the Ulavi Channabasaveshwara fair was reportedly stolen from Mattigatti village in Kundgol taluk, causing concern among devotees and local residents. The theft took place during the fair, which attracts a large number of people from surrounding villages and towns, making parking areas crowded and vulnerable to such incidents.

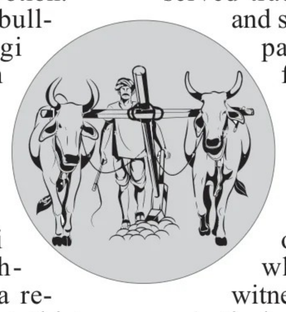
According to police sources, the stolen vehicle is a Hero HF Deluxe motorcycle belonging to a local resident who had parked it near the fair premises while attending the event. The owner later discovered that the two-wheeler was missing and immediately alerted the authorities. Despite a search in the surrounding area, the vehicle could not be traced.

# Gabbur Farmer's Bullocks Complete Ulavi Yatra in Just 13 Hrs

**HUBBALLI**

The annual Ulavi fair, a major cultural and spiritual celebration for the people of Dharwad district, witnessed a remarkable and inspiring moment this year as bullocks belonging to a farmer from Gabbur in Hubballi completed the sacred yatra to Ulavi in just 13 hours. The extraordinary feat has drawn widespread admiration from devotees and villagers, highlighting the deep-rooted traditions associated with the historic fair.

The Ulavi fair, held at Ulavi, is renowned for its unique rituals, especially the bullock cart pilgrimage undertaken by devotees as an expression of faith and penance. Every year, farmers and devotees travel long distances using bullock carts, wheelbarrows, and on foot, considering the journey itself an act of devotion.



This year, the bullocks of Shivayogi Muthappa from Gabbur created a special place in the hearts of devotees by completing the pilgrimage to Ulavi Channabasaveshwara Temple in a record time of just thirteen hours.

The achievement was seen as a result of discipline, care, and spiritual dedication by the farmer towards his animals.

According to locals, the journey was undertaken with great enthusiasm and spiritual focus.

The farmer reportedly observed traditional practices and sadhana while preparing his bullocks for the yatra. The sight of the bullocks reaching Ulavi in such a short span astonished fellow devotees, many of whom gathered to witness the arrival.

As the bullocks reached the temple premises, devotees offered prayers and paid respects, treating the animals with reverence for accomplishing such a demanding pilgrimage. Many described the moment as a symbol of harmony between humans, animals, and faith. This is not just about speed; it is about devotion and tradition, said a devotee present at the fair.

The people of Gabbur take special pride in celebrating the Ulavi fair every year, and the bullock cart pilgrimage remains the highlight of their participation. Villagers say the tradition has been passed down through generations and continues to strengthen community bonds and cultural identity.

The feat has sparked discussions across nearby villages, with many praising the farmer's dedication and the endurance of the bullocks.

# Invitation Extended to Khandre for Chhatrapati Shivaji Jayanti Celebrations

**BHALKI**

Preparations are underway for the grand celebration of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti in Bhalki, and as part of this, an official invitation has been extended to state minister Eshwar Khandre to attend the event. The Shivaji Jayanti Utsava Samiti formally invited the minister during a meeting held at his official residence.

The Jayanti celebrations are scheduled to be held on February 19 and are expected to witness large public participation. According to members of the celebration committee, the event will be organised with traditional fervour and cultural grandeur, reflecting the ideals and legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The invitation was extended under the leadership of Shivaji Jayanti Utsava Samiti president Dr. Gunderao Shedole, who personally handed over the invitation letter to Minister Eshwar Khandre.

As per the programme outline, the celebrations will begin in the morning with a grand procession carrying a portrait of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The procession will start from the Bhalkeshwar Temple and pass through prominent streets before culminating at Shivaji Chowk near the railway gate, where floral tributes will be offered. Committee members stated that the procession would include cultural troupes, traditional music, and participation from various community groups.

In the evening, the Jayanti celebrations will continue with a formal programme, including speeches highlighting the life, values, and administrative vision of Shivaji Maharaj.

**SPIRITUAL VISIT**

# *Singer Sonu Nigam Visits Siddharudha Mutt, Offers Special Prayers*

**HUBBALLI**

Renowned playback singer Sonu Nigam paid a spiritual visit to the Siddharudha Mutt in Hubballi, where he had darshan of Siddharudha Swamiji and offered special prayers.

The visit drew attention from devotees and music lovers alike, as the singer took time out from his busy schedule to seek spiritual solace.

According to sources at the mutt, Sonu Nigam arrived and participated in traditional rituals, expressing deep reverence towards Siddharudha Swamiji. He also spent around ten minutes in meditation near the sacred seat of Siddharudha, maintaining silence and focus during the spiritual practice. Devotees present at the mutt said the singer appeared calm and deeply immersed in the experience.

Members of the Siddharudha Mutt Trust warmly welcomed Sonu Nigam and later honoured him with a statue of Siddharudha as a mark of respect and remembrance.

Trust officials said the gesture symbolised the mutt's blessings and appreciation for the singer's humility and devotion. Sonu Nigam reportedly expressed gratitude to the mutt authorities for the honour and described the visit as a peaceful and meaningful experience.

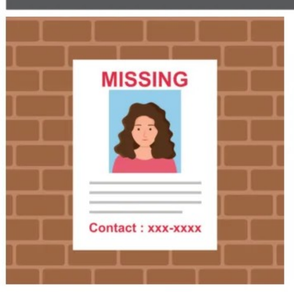
Sources revealed that Sonu Nigam had arrived in Hubballi on the previous day to attend a musical programme. Despite his professional commitments, he made it a point to visit the mutt, highlighting his spiritual inclination and respect for the region's religious heritage.

His visit created a sense of excitement among fans and devotees, some of whom gathered to catch a glimpse of the celebrated singer.

The Siddharudha Mutt, a prominent spiritual centre in North Karnataka, regularly attracts devotees from across the country. Trust members said visits by well-known personalities help draw wider attention to the teachings and legacy of Siddharudha Swamiji, who is revered for his spiritual wisdom and social influence.

Devotees and local residents welcomed Sonu Nigam's visit, stating that it reflected a harmonious blend of art and spirituality. Many felt that such visits by public figures inspire people to stay connected with spiritual values amidst modern, fast-paced life.

## QUICK READ




### Two Women Reported Missing in Holalkere

**Holalkere**

A case has been registered regarding the disappearance of two women under the limits of Holalkere Police Station, according to an official release issued on February 9. The missing persons have been identified as Ningamma, wife of Shivraj (26), and Hemalata, daughter of Guruswamy (16). Police said both have been missing for some time, and efforts are underway to trace their whereabouts. According to the description provided by the police, Ningamma is about 5.1 feet tall, has a slim face, average build, and wheatish complexion. At the time of her disappearance, she was reportedly wearing a blue-coloured chudidar. She speaks Kannada.

### Fraudsters target PM Matru Vandana beneficiaries

**Chitradurga**

A fraud case targeting beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana has come to light in Chitradurga district, prompting authorities to issue an urgent public warning. According to officials, unidentified persons have been making phone calls to pregnant women and lactating mothers, impersonating anganwadi workers or staff of the Women and Child Development Department, and cheating them of their money. As per the complaint, calls were made from mobile number 9153257976 to beneficiaries residing under the anganwadi limits of Kadabanahalli village in the taluk. The callers falsely claimed that they were calling to facilitate the credit of PM Matru Vandana Yojana funds into beneficiaries' bank accounts. Under this pretext, they obtained One-Time Passwords (OTPs) and sensitive banking details. On Monday, one beneficiary reportedly lost more than ₹50,000 after the fraudsters gained unauthorised access to her bank account using the OTP shared over the phone.

### Modern bonded labour emerging on digital platforms: Judge Vijay

**Chitradurga**

Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority M. Vijay expressed serious concern over the changing nature of bonded labour, stating that it has taken new and dangerous forms in the modern era. He stressed the urgent need to identify and curb these emerging patterns to effectively eradicate the practice. He was speaking after flagging off an awareness rally organised on the occasion of Bonded Labour Abolition Day at the premises of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Chitradurga on Monday. The rally was jointly organised by the district administration, District Legal Services Authority, Zilla Panchayat, Police Department, Labour Department, and various voluntary organisations.

# Revenue Services Moving Online, Speed Up Implementation

Revenue Minister reviewed Gadag district performance and directed officials to accelerate digitisation of services

**GADAG**

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda chaired a progress review meeting of the Revenue Department in Gadag and issued strict instructions to officials to fast-track the implementation of various schemes, with a strong focus on complete digitisation of revenue services.

Addressing the meeting, the minister said the Revenue Department must move decisively towards an online and paperless system. He noted that a pilot project using the Pauti App is currently underway in Gadag district and directed officials to significantly improve its progress. The Revenue Department should be fully digitalised, and this process must be completed by the end of March, he said.

The minister announced that from the next year, the Jamabandi process will also be conducted online. He instructed officials and staff to make necessary preparations in advance. Emphasising the government's commitment to a paperless administration, he said survey-related work should also be fully digitised and that all survey sketches must be maintained only in digital format going forward.

Reviewing Aadhaar seeding progress in the district, Krishna Byre Gowda said Gadag has achieved 85.62 percent completion and asked officials to take urgent steps to reach 100 percent soon. He also instructed officers to ensure proper verification of records in cases where land remains in the names of deceased persons, especially while processing insurance claims and compensation.

The minister expressed concern that scanning and uploading of records has reached only 48 percent and directed officials to speed up the process. He asked the department to give priority to key activities such as Pauti services, the Bhoosuraksha scheme, land beat system, Jamabandi, and subdivision of holdings. He stressed that all land-related documents, including RTC extracts, should be made easily accessible to citizens. Krishna Byre Gowda also reminded officials that March 16 is the deadline for submitting proposals related to revenue villages and instructed them to ensure all proposals are submitted within the stipulated time.

*Akka Mahadevi Chaitanya Peetha's contribution to society is unique and enduring, speakers said at a national-level event*

# Permanent Grant Announced for Akka Mahadevi Multilingual Thought Conference

**BIDAR**

The contribution of Akka Mahadevi Chaitanya Peetha to society is exceptional, said Somanna Bevinamarad, Chairman of the Karnataka Border Area Development Authority. He announced that a permanent grant would be provided to support the annual Akka Mahadevi Multilingual National Thought Conference.

He was speaking after inaugurating the two-day Akka Mahadevi Multilingual National Thought Conference, the inauguration of a cultural complex, and the Akka Mahadevi National Award presentation ceremony, organised at Srisailam. The event was jointly organised by the Shivakaruna Yogashrama Charitable Trust and the Karnataka Border Area Development Authority.

Somanna Bevinamarad said Akka Mahadevi Chaitanya Peetha has been consistently working for the propagation of Akka Mahadevi's ideals through literature, culture, and social engagement. He noted that although visiting certain sacred forests is not possible today, the spiritual presence and vision of Akka Mahadevi, as interpreted and spread by the Peetha, continues to guide devotees and scholars alike. He added that the Peetha has been doing commendable work in preserving Kannada identity in border regions.

Presiding over the event, Peetha chairperson Mate Karunadevi said the institution has been tirelessly working to spread Akka Mahadevi's philosophy, values, and contributions across spiritual, literary, and cultural spheres.

Responding to a request by spiritual leader Shivayya Swami, Somanna Bevinamarad formally announced that a permanent annual grant would be sanctioned for organising the Akka Mahadevi Multilingual National Thought Conference every year.

Speaking on the occasion, Peetha director Dr. Rajasekhar Shivacharya said Mate Karunadevi is a true embodiment of Akka Mahadevi's ideals and has undertaken several impactful initiatives for women's empowerment. Central Government committee member Shivayya Swami said the Akka Mahadevi Chaitanya Peetha has been recognising women achievers from political, social, educational, and literary fields across the country by conferring the Akka Mahadevi National Award. During the programme, the Akka Mahadevi National Award for 2024–25 was presented to Gouramma Nyamati of Dharwad.

# Basava Utsava and Morambi Jatra Mahotsava Inaugurated With Devotion

**BHALKI**

The Basava Utsava and Morambi Jatra Mahotsava was inaugurated with religious fervour at Morambi village in Bhalki taluk, with speakers underlining the historic role of Basavadi Sharanas in the eradication of caste-based discrimination. The event was held at the Nandi Basaveshwara Temple and witnessed the participation of devotees, scholars, and community leaders from across the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Guru Basava Pattadevaru, Peethadhipati of Hiremutt Samsthana, said the caste system was extremely rigid and inhumane during the 12th century. At a time when social inequality was at its peak, Basavadi Sharanas played a decisive role in challenging and dismantling the caste system. Their work remains relevant even today, he said.

He praised the villagers of Morambi for organising Basava Utsava with great dedication, especially in rural areas. In many religions, only the founder's name is highlighted. But in the Lingayat tradition, nearly 770 Sharanas are remembered and revered. Basavanna elevated the common human being instead of placing himself above society. He gave the world its first form of a constitution through Anubhava Mantapa and ensured true freedom and dignity for women, he said.

Retired teacher Channabasappa Patange, who performed the Shatsthala flag hoisting ceremony, said human life attains meaning only when one understands one's true self and lives with ethical awareness.

Basava Kalyana Anubhava Mantapa coordinator Shivananda Swami graced the programme and delivered a spiritual message. Inaugurating the event, professor Sangashetti Shettar observed that the social challenges of the 12th century and the 21st century share many similarities. The vachanas of Basavadi Sharanas continue to guide our lives and offer solutions to modern problems, he said.

The programme was presided over by Suryakant Biradar. Kumari Sharada Sharanappa Allu presented Anubhava Nudi, sharing spiritual reflections inspired by Basava philosophy.

Several dignitaries and officials were present, including PSI Prabhakar Patil, Revenue Inspector Prashanth Kote, PDO Prashanth Kumar, Taluk Working Journalists' Association president Jayaraj Dhabashetty, MGSS director Ankushrao Patil, Sudhakar Jadhav, Basavaraj Hanumanthappa Biradar, Shankar Makaji, village elder Shanmukhappa Ucchakar, Rekha Srinivas Biradar, Khushi Appannakarade, Pratik Bhima Metre, Vijaykumar Varad, and Avinash. Khushi Appanna welcomed the gathering, Rekha Srinivas compered the programme, and Pratik Metre proposed the vote of thanks.

# Early Detection Can Save Lives: MLA Yashpal Suvarna

**UDUPI**

**Awareness and timely screening can significantly reduce cancer cases and help people lead healthier lives, speakers said**

Cancer is a deadly disease, but early detection and timely treatment can save many lives, said Udupi MLA Yashpal Suvarna. He was speaking after inaugurating the World Cancer Day programme held at the district hospital premises in Udupi on February 9.

The programme was jointly organised by the District Health and Family Welfare Department, Udupi, Adarsha Multi Speciality Hospital, Adarsha Group of Institutions, National Health Mission, District NCD Unit, District Hospital NCD Wing, Indian Medical Association (IMA) Udupi Coastal Branch, Udupi College of Nursing, CSI Lombard Memorial College of Nursing, and New City College of Nursing, Udupi.

Addressing the gathering, Yashpal Suvarna said unhealthy lifestyles have increased the risk of cancer. He stressed that creating awareness about the disease, its early symptoms, and the importance of early treatment can effectively reduce cancer-related deaths. If people are informed and alert, cancer can be controlled to a large extent, enabling a healthier society, he said.

Highlighting Udupi district's achievements, the MLA noted that the district, known for education, tourism, and religious centres, has also emerged as a model in healthcare services. He praised doctors of the district for providing quality medical care and earning recognition even at the international level. He also lauded medical professionals for balancing their duties with social service by spreading awareness on non-communicable diseases.

He urged the public to take greater responsibility for their health by consuming nutritious food, engaging in at least two hours of daily physical activity, and undergoing regular health check-ups. He informed that construction of the new district hospital building has reached about 70 percent completion and assured that efforts are being made to complete the remaining work soon, which would further improve access to quality healthcare for the public.

On the occasion, MCH Hospital gynaecologist Dr. Kavita and Adarsha Hospital cancer specialist Dr. Ananth S. Mathad delivered special lectures on cancer awareness, early detection, and treatment options.

# Free Paediatric Heart Health Camp Held

**GADAG**

A free paediatric heart health check-up camp was organised at Gadag Multispeciality Hospital with the objective of identifying heart-related problems in children at an early stage and creating awareness about child health among parents.

Speaking at the camp, cardiologist and chairman of Gadag Multispeciality Hospital Dr. Chandrakant Gadag said providing quality treatment to the public and reducing the number of deaths is the hospital's primary mission. He noted that the hospital has been offering continuous and dedicated medical services to people for many years, ensuring affordable and quality healthcare.

The camp was organised in collaboration with Rotary Club of Gadag and was aimed at children below 12 years of age. Dr. Chandrakant Gadag expressed concern over misinformation being spread about the hospital despite doctors rendering 24-hour service to patients. He urged the public not to believe baseless rumours and to cooperate in strengthening healthcare services.

He explained that the camp was organised to create awareness about child health protection and to detect heart-related disorders at an early stage, which can significantly improve treatment outcomes. Early diagnosis, he said, plays a crucial role in preventing complications later in life.

Rotary Club assistant governor Houshetti Patil attended the programme as the chief guest. He appreciated Gadag Multispeciality Hospital for providing quality treatment at low cost, especially to economically weaker sections. He said even patients arriving in critical condition receive timely and effective medical care at the hospital.

He also highlighted Rotary Club's continued efforts in social service, stating that through humanitarian initiatives, the club has been bringing hope and relief to thousands of families. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sachin Gadag said the Rotary Club has been actively involved in social service for several years and assured continued support to such healthcare initiatives in the future.

**REVENUE DIGITISATION DRIVE**

# *Revenue Department Fully Committed to Digitisation: Min Gowda*

**GADAG**

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda has said that the state government is fully committed to the complete digitisation of the Revenue Department to provide transparent and efficient services to the public, while putting an end to the role of middlemen. He was speaking at a press conference held at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Gadag on Monday.

The minister stated that before the present government came to power, there were 10,774 overdue cases pending in tahsildar offices across the state. Through a special drive, most of these cases have been cleared, and only 478 cases remain pending at present. He said officials have been directed to dispose of these cases at the earliest.

Krishna Byre Gowda further said that overdue cases in Assistant Commissioner (AC) courts have come down significantly. While there were 73,624 pending cases earlier, the number has now been reduced to 11,605. Of the 32,782 cases that were pending for more than five years, only 3,155 remain, and officials have been instructed to clear them within the next two months.

Referring to land issues faced by Bagair Hukum farmers, the minister said the government has launched the Nanna Bhoomi Abhiyana to resolve survey and RTC-related problems. He explained that 5,842 phodi corrections were carried out between 2013 and 2018, while 8,500 cases were resolved between 2018 and 2023. Since January 2025, survey and phodi correction work has been taken up in 1,93,615 cases across the state, with officials delivering services directly at the doorsteps of farmers.

On the issue of regularising undocumented habitations such as tandas and hattis, the minister said that while one lakh title deeds were distributed in the previous six years, the current government has issued 1.10 lakh title deeds in just two-and-a-half years. He announced that another 1.10 lakh title deeds will be distributed at a special programme to be held in Haveri on February 14.

Krishna Byre Gowda also revealed that the government has identified nearly 49 lakh land records still standing in the names of deceased persons and has begun transferring them to legal heirs. So far, 12 lakh original heirs have received land ownership. In Gadag district alone, out of 50,000 such cases, only 12,000 remain pending.

QUICK READ

## Pak faces vaccine shock as Indian supply dry up

**NEW DELHI**

Pakistan could face an annual $1.2 billion vaccine import bill by 2031 after India stopped shipments. The halt, linked to last year's military clashes, exposed Pakistan's dependence on foreign vaccines, as the country offers 13 free vaccines but makes none locally. Health Minister Mustafa Kamal warned that without local production, costs will soar when international support ends. Currently, Pakistan spends $400 million yearly on vaccines, nearly half funded by GAVI, the global vaccine alliance for poorer countries.

## Siddique murder case: Accused gets bail

**MUMBAI**

The Bombay High Court granted bail to Akashdeep Karaj Singh, accused in the murder of Congress leader Baba Siddique, making him the first to get relief. The 22-year-old, from Punjab, was directed not to leave Mumbai until the trial ends. Siddique, 66, was shot outside his son's office in Bandra East on October 12, 2024.

# $175 mn package anchor India-Seychelles ties

### India–Seychelles Joint Vision eyes sustainability, economic growth and security through enhanced linkages

**NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday welcomed Seychelles as a full-time member of the Colombo Security Conclave, describing defence cooperation and maritime security as key pillars of India-Seychelles relations.

Speaking at a joint press meet with Seychelles President Patrick Herminie in New Delhi, Modi highlighted plans to strengthen collaboration in renewable energy, climate resilience, and adaptive solutions.

He emphasized that as maritime neighbours, the blue economy offers a natural area of cooperation. "India will share its expertise in marine research, capacity building, and data sharing with Seychelles," he said. Modi added that Seychelles' membership in the security conclave would enhance peace and stability across the Indian Ocean.

The Prime Minister also announced a $175 million special economic package to support projects in social housing, e-mobility, vocational training, health, defence, and maritime security. He welcomed the signing of several MoUs, covering areas such as pharmacopoeial cooperation, cultural exchanges, and digital solutions sharing.

Modi further highlighted digital transformation initiatives, promoting medical tourism, quality healthcare,

and infrastructure development. He also praised the Indian community in Seychelles for their contributions to the country's social and economic growth.

President Herminie, visiting India for the first time since taking office in October 2025, paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat, noting Gandhi's enduring influence on India-Seychelles partnership. The leaders launched the India-Seychelles Joint Vision to guide long-term cooperation in defence, technology, and sustainable development.

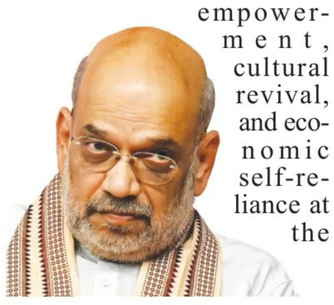
### BOTH LEADERS AGREED TO

- Implement training programmes and exchange visits in the area of mental health through institutional linkages.
- Support recruitment and deputation of medical specialists, nurses, paramedics and technicians from India to meet the needs of Seychelles.
- Strengthen bilateral cooperation in public health through exchange of visits and institutional linkages.
- Work together to support the construction of a new hospital in Seychelles.
- Collaborate on long term augmentation of healthcare infrastructure of Seychelles, including measures to enhance affordability and reliable access to medicines and medical equipment.
- Work together to institutionalize a mechanism to procure quality and cost-effective food and essential commodities from India.

## 'PM promoted tribal culture, forest resources branding'

**JAGDALPUR**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting tribal empowerment, cultural revival, and economic self-reliance at the closing ceremony of the Bastar Pandum Festival in Chhattisgarh.



Speaking in Bastar district, Shah highlighted how the government has commercialised tribal products and traditions, creating livelihood opportunities while showcasing tribal heritage nationally.

Shah noted that celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas marked a key step in recognising tribal contributions to the nation. "PM Modi promoted tribal culture, food, and heritage, and also channelised and commercialised forest resources through branding and marketing of tribal products," he said.

The Bastar Pandum Festival, organised by the state government, drew large crowds and showcased the region's rich tribal heritage. Exhibitions featured traditional handicrafts, folk art, local food items, tribal dances, and vibrant folk music, attracting visitors from across Chhattisgarh and beyond. The event was inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu.

Judges and participants praised the festival for preserving culinary and cultural traditions. Somaru Ram Kawasi highlighted authentic tribal foods, while participant Nisha Nag noted the revival of forgotten traditional beverages and porridges. Folk artist Shanu Markandey thanked the Tribal Development Department for providing a platform to showcase prayers, folk songs, and festivals like Chherchera.

## Revanth Reddy once caught with money bags: KTR

**BHUPALPALLY**

wBharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) Working President K T Rama Rao on Monday accused Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of corruption and misusing power while addressing a public event in Bhupalpally ahead of local body elections.

KTR claimed that Revanth Reddy was once "caught with money bags" while allegedly attempting to influence legislators for the benefit of Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu.The BRS leader criticised Reddy for using abusive and aggressive language instead of addressing questions about welfare schemes and governance. "Whenever people question the Congress government about its promises, the CM responds harshly rather than offering clarity," KTR said. He also described Reddy as 'Lagula Thondala' Reddy, highlighting what he called the CM's reliance on threats and intimidation.

KTR further questioned Revanth Reddy's role during the Telangana statehood movement and challenged his political credentials from that period. He said the CM uses vulgar and disgraceful language against the public, the opposition, and even women, undermining public trust and governance.

The BRS leader repeated his allegation that Revanth Reddy tried to manipulate legislators to favour Chandrababu Naidu, linking it to past controversies surrounding the Congress leader.

## Video row: Owaisi seeks action against Assam CM

**HYDERABAD :** AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday filed a police complaint in Hyderabad seeking criminal action against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a now-deleted video shared on social media. The video, posted by the Assam BJP on 'X' and later removed, allegedly showed Sarma aiming a rifle and firing at two individuals—one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard—accompanied by the caption "point-blank shot."Owaisi described the video as "genocidal hate speech" and accused Sarma of deliberately outraging the religious feelings of Muslims, promoting enmity between communities, and making statements prejudicial to national integration. He said the chief minister has, over the years, repeatedly targeted the Muslim community through social media, print platforms, speeches, and other forums.The AIMIM leader added that Sarma had recently intensified such hate speeches with a conscious intention to incite communal tensions. Owaisi noted that the February 7 video, although removed, continues circulating on social media and depicted Muslims being targeted.He said phrases in the video like "point-blank shot" and "no mercy" were part of a deliberate act to inflame religious hatred, promote ill-will between communities, and potentially incite violence.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, KRISHNAMURTHY C S/o CHINNASWAMY R/o Doddakari, Majara, Kambampalli, Bethamangala, Kolar, Karnataka-563116, have changed the name of my minor son DEEPU K aged 16 years and he shall hereafter be known as DEEPAK KUMAR K

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, VENKAT REDDY S N (old name), a resident of C/O Nagaraja Bangalore bypass road, Madikere cross Madikere Oolavadi, Chikkaballapur, Karnataka - 563125, INDIA, have changed my name to VENKATAREDDY S N (NEW Name) vide affidavit dated 09-02-2026, sworn advocate and notary Mohammed Hussain K.

**IN THE COURT OF HON'BLE CIVIL JUDGTE AND JMFCAT HIRIYUR**
**O. S. NO. 46/2026**
**Plaintiff: Bhagyamma & Others** V/s
**Defendants: Chief Secretary & Others**
**PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT**

The husband of plaintiff and father of plaintiff No. 2 to 4 namely E. Jayaram S/o late Eerappa went to the aaddress of the said applicant, Maddihally village, dharmapura Hobli, Hiriyur taluk on 27-11-2017 and has not returned home. The plaintiffs have filed a complaint in this regard at the Abbinahole police station. However, the said police personnel have enquired the said E. Jayaram has not been found despite making inquiries, the plaintiffs have filed a petition for a declaration of death regarding his disappearance. In order to issue a press release in this reagard, if any heirs other than the above petitioner any dispute regarding the matter of the said person, they are requested to appear in this case on 17-03-2026 Hon'ble court at 11.00 A M in person or through their lawyer and file their dispute, failing which, it is understood that this petition will be decided unilaterally.

**By order of the court dated**
**Chief ministrial Officer, Civil Judge Court, Hiriyur**
Advocate for the Plaintiffs:
**K. V. Dayananda**

**IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVIL JUDGE AND J.M.F.C AT HOSAKOTE**
**C.MIS.NO:- 61 /2026**

**BETWEEN:- Sri.Shivakumar.A.C,** S/o late A.C.Channabasappa, Aged about 63 years, Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hosakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District **....Petitioner.**
**AND:- The Thahasildar, Birth & Death Register, HosakoteTaluk, Bangaore Rural District.**
**....Respondent.**

**PEPAR PUBLICATION DRAFT**

The Grand Father of the petitioner by name A.C.Siddegowda Son of Late Channabasavegowda died on 17-01-1963 at Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hasakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. The petitioner has filed this petition for obtaining of death certificate of said Nanjamma D/o late A.C.Siddegowda who died on 27-07-1961, the petitioner published this matter for anybody interesting persons or by a pleader if in this matter will appear before this Hon'ble court in person or by pleader on..18-3-2026 Take notice than in default of your appearance, which this petition will be disposed of ex-party.
Given under my hand and the seal of the court this 09th day of February 2026

**By order of the court**
**Sheristedar, Principal Civil Judge & J.M.F.C Hoskota**
Advocate for petitioners: **Latha.M.,** Advocate KAR 2371/2021 Hosakote.
Place:-Hosakote, Date:-09-02-2026

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, IMAD UL HAQ (old name), a resident of House No 31142, 14th Floor, building 3, Tower 1, Prestige Falcon City, Konanakunte, Bengaluru, Karnataka – 560062, INDIA, have changed my name to IMAD UL HAQ BADRI (NEW Name) vide affidavit dated 09-02-2026, sworn advocate and notary Mohammed Hussain K.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, MONTURAJ DSOZA S/o DIYOG DSOUZA, R/o B/533, Convent Road, Haliyal, Uttara Kannada, Karnataka-581329, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MONTHURAJ DIYOG DSOUZA.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, VASANTH KUMAR B T S/o THAMMAIAH R/o 09, Shanthigrama Hobali, Banavase, Mosale Hosahalli, Alur, Hassan, Karnataka-573212, have changed the name of my minor son HARSHIKA V aged 8 years and he shall hereafter be known as HEMASHREE V.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, PAVANAMMA W/o GANESH, R/o 65, 3rd Cross, Kathriguppe, Main Road, Vivekananda Nagar, Srinivasa Nagar, B S K 3rd Stage, Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka-560085, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PAVANA.

**IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVIL JUDGE AND J.M.F.C AT HOSAKOTE**
**C.MIS.NO:- 60 /2026**

**BETWEEN:- Sri.Shivakumar.A.C,** S/o late A.C.Channabasappa, Aged about 63 years, Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hosakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District **....Petitioner.**
**AND:- The Thahasildar, Birth & Death Register, HosakoteTaluk, Bangaore Rural District.**
**....Respondent.**

**PEPAR PUBLICATION DRAFT**

The Aunt of the petitioner by name Puttabasamma D/o late A.C.Siddegowda died on 22-04-1960 at Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hasakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. The petitioner has filed this petition for obtaining of death certificate of said Nanjamma D/o late A.C.Siddegowda who died on 27-07-1961, the petitioner published this matter for anybody interesting persons or by a pleader if in this matter will appear before this Hon'ble court in person or by pleader on..18-3-2026 Take notice than in default of your appearance, which this petition will be disposed of ex-party.
Given under my hand and the seal of the court this 09th day of February 2026

**By order of the court**
**Sheristedar, Principal Civil Judge & J.M.F.C Hoskota**
Advocate for petitioners: **Latha.M.,** Advocate KAR 2371/2021 Hosakote.
Place:-Hosakote, Date:-09-02-2026

**IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVIL JUDGE AND J.M.F.C AT HOSAKOTE**
**C.MIS.NO:- 59 /2026**

**BETWEEN:- Sri.Shivakumar.A.C,** S/o late A.C.Channabasappa, Aged about 63 years, Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hosakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District **....Petitioner.**
**AND:- The Thahasildar, Birth & Death Register, HosakoteTaluk, Bangaore Rural District.**
**....Respondent.**

**PEPAR PUBLICATION DRAFT**

The Aunt of the petitioner by name Nanjamma D/o late A.C.Siddegowda died on 27-07-1961 at Atturu Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hasakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. The petitioner has filed this petition for obtaining of death certificate of said Nanjamma D/o late A.C.Siddegowda who died on 27-07-1961, the petitioner published this matter for anybody interesting persons or by a pleader if in this matter will appear before this Hon'ble court in person or by pleader on..18-3-2026 Take notice than in default of your appearance, which this petition will be disposed of ex-party.
Given under my hand and the seal of the court this 09th day of February 2026

**By order of the court**
**Sheristedar, Principal Civil Judge & J.M.F.C Hoskota**
Advocate for petitioners: **Latha.M.,** Advocate KAR 2371/2021 Hosakote.
Place:-Hosakote, Date:-09-02-2026

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is for general information that I, PRIYA SOMANI D/o RAMAVTAR SOMANI W/o VIVEK LAKHOTIA R/o 91 Sithara 2nd Main, 4th Cross SP Naidu Layout, Ramamurthy Nagar, BBMP North, Bengaluru, Karnataka- 560016, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as PRIYA LAKHOTIA in my minor son namely KHUSHANK LAKHOTIA aged 07 years in his Birth Certificate Registration No. B-2019:33-16380-000521. The actual name of mine is PRIYA SOMANI respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**

I, **SYED MEHBOOB SYED PEER,** S/o. Syed Peer, resident of. No 259, Chikkanna Soolai Shetty Layout, Shampur Road, Arabic College Post, Bangalore-560045, have changed my name to **SYED MEHBOOB,** vide affidavit dated: 06.02.2026, before Notary CHANDRĀSHEKAR.M., Bangalore.

**BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION**
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Mahalakshmipuram Division, 12th Main,
11th Cross, West of Chord Road, Bengaluru
**No.: EE/MLP/TEND/E-PROC/12/2025-26 Date: 09.02.2026**

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**

**(Through GOK KPP Portal Only) Single Cover System**
Tenders on item rate are invited by the undersigned for the work mentioned below from the registered contractors of Bengaluru West City Corporation or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / BBMP or any State Government Organizations. **(Standard Tender Document - KW1, KW2, KW3 & KW4)**

| Sl. No. | Name of Work |
|---|---|
| 1 | Civil Maintenance in Mahalakshmipuram Constituency Parks. **Estimate Cost (Rs. in Lakhs): 10.00, Approximate Amount put to tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 8.46, EMD (in Rs.): 25,000/-** |

**Calender of Events: (1)** Tender document can be downloaded from the GOK E-Procurement website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from **11.02.2026** after **4:30 p.m. (2)** Last date for receipt of queries: **16.02.2026** upto **3:00 p.m. (3)** Last date for uploading the filled proposals is **18.02.2026** upto **4:00 p.m. (4)** Date of opening of Technical proposals is **19.02.2026** after **4:30 p.m.** through KPP Portal. Further details can be obtained from the above office during working hours or from the website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

**Sd/- Executive Engineer,**
**Mahalakshmipuram Division, BWCC**

**CITY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MALUR, KOLAR DISTRICT, KOLAR**
Maharaja circle Malur-563130
E-mail: ka.malur.tmc@gmail.com, phone:08151-232238
Letter No:TMC/AE/E-Proc/CR/16/2025-26
Date:07.02.2026

**TENDER NOTIFICATION**
**(as per the conditions of the Standarad Tender Document E-Procuement Tender Notification)**

Constructions of Roads Work in Malur CMC under SFC Special grant and item rate is invited in KPPP portal. For more details visit KPPP PORTAL The Indent Numbers details below. Any addendums will be notified through e-procurement only. **(1)** DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_ INDENT52088/CALL-3 Rs.79.50 Lakhs, **(2)** DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT52093/CALL-3 Rs.34.20 Lakhs, **(3)** DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT52094/CALL-2 Rs.15.00 Lakhs, **(4)** DMA/2025-26/SE7225 Rs.17.78 Lakhs, **(5)** DMA/2025-26/SE7123 Rs.16.00 Lakhs and **(6)** DMA/2025-26/IND5957 Rs.17.40 Lakhs

**Sd/-**
**(Dr.M.R.Ravi, IAS)**
**Administrator CMC, Malur.**
**And Deputy commissioner**
**Kolar dist, Kolar.**

**Sd/-**
**(Mahadeva.M.S)**
**Commissioner Grade-2**
**CMC, Malur.**

DIPR/KOLAR/R.O.No.486/KSMC&A/2025-26

**Government of Karnataka**
**Public Works Department**
**Office of the Executive Engineer, Mysuru Division, Mysuru.**
**E-mail: eepwdmys21@gmail.com**
**Phone No. & Fax No. 0821-2420810**
**IFT No. 32/2025-26/ Dt.07.02.2026**
**ITEM WISE SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**

On behalf of the Governor of Karnataka, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department has published item wise Tender notification for the works approved under this division with KW-2 and 3 Conditions & Regulations with Two cover systems, which has been approved under the head of account 4059-80-051-0-60-422 SCP & 3054-03-337-0-05-200 SH Maintaince for the year 2025-26. The Min APT is **Rs.37.41** & Max APT is **Rs.81.19 Lakhs** and Min EMD amount is Rs.0.75 Lakhs & Max EMD amount **Rs.1.62 Lakhs.** Tenders shall be submitted in KPP-Portal (https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in) **from 07.02.2026 to 16.02.2026** within **17.00 PM.** KPWD Class-III & above Contractor Registered in KPP-Portal are eligible.
More details can be obtained from the office of the under Signed during office hours.

**Note: 1. Undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any tenders and cancel the tender process and reject all tenders ant any time prior to the award of contract, 2. Any amendments or modifications in tender notification will be published in KPP-Portal Only.**

**Sd/-Executive Engineer,**
**Public Work Department, Mysuru Division, Mysuru**
DIPR/DDMYS/1629/KSMCA/924/2025-26

**NAME CHANGE**

I, **MYNUDDEEN KHAN KOLIMI MOHAMMAD,** S/o Kolimi Jafrulla Khan, resident No 1-90, NS Peta, Punganur Post, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh - 517247, have changed my name to KOLIMI **MOHAMMED MOINUDDIN KHAN,** Vide Affidavit Dated: 09.02.2026 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

**NAME CHANGE**

I, **ANUSHREE NAGRAJ PATIL,** D/o Nagraj Dattatay Patil, resident Flat No F-209, Parimala Sunridge Apartment, Siddhapura, Varthur Main Road, Opp DMART, Whitefield, Bengaluru - 560066, have changed my name **ANUSHREE PATIL,** Vide Affidavit Dated: 07.02.2026 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

**Government of Karnataka**
**BENGALURU URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYAT**
**O/o Executive Engineer, Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division, First Floor, Zilla Panchayat Building, S. Kariyappa Road, Banashankari (Near Banashankari Temple) Bengaluru-560070.**
No.EE/RDW&SD/BNG(U)/TND/16/2025-26 Date: 07.02.2026

**Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Tender Notice**

Tenders are invited through Karnataka Public procurement portal for the works approved Under JJM Head of grants for the year 2025-26 Under Two Cover System. The Tender Documents can be obtained and submitted on or before **18.02.2026 up to 4.00 pm.** For further details contact the above address during office hours or visit **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

**Sd/-Executive Engineer,**
**RDW&S Division, Bengaluru Urban Dist, Bengaluru**
DIPR/CP/Shirdi Sai/5539/2025-26

**Zilla Panchayath, Bangalore South Dist.**
**Office of the Joint Director**
**SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT**
**Zilla Panchayath Bhavana, 2nd Floor, B.M Road Ramanagara, Bengaluru South District - 562159.**
No. JD/SWD/R/CR-/2025-26 Date : 07.02.2026

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**

For the Year 2025-26 Department of Social Welfare Department Pre Matric Hostels in Bangalore South District for this Hostel inviting tender for supplying Electric and Electronic Items **1)** Computers **2)** UPS **3)** Chapathi Maker **4)** Giser **5)** LED TV items through E-procurement Portal "registered tenderers may download the application form and other details from government website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** and relevant documents and EMD amount may upload with in stipulated date: 07.02.2026 and also Tenderers also obtained details from this office indent no is **SWD/2025-26/IND0377**.
**1)** Estimated amount for tender **Rs.55.00 lakhs. 2)** Tender Form amount : **As per E-Portal. 3)** Date of commencement of Tender From uploading through e-portal: 07.02.2026. **4)** Sample submit **Date: 19.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M to 5.30 P.M. 5)** Last date and time of tender subbmitting through E-portal Date: **21.02.2026 at 5.00 P.M. 6)** Date and time of opening of Technical envelopes of e-portal Date: **23.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M 7)** Date and time of Opening of Financial envelopes of E-Protal Date: **26.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. 8)** E.M.D. Amount : **1.37 lakhs. 9)** Total Security amount: **2.75 lakhs.** For more information contact Office of the Joint Director, Social Welfare Department, 2nd Floor, Zilla Panchayath Bhavana, B.M Road, Ramanagara, Bangalore South Dist.-562159. Mobile No.: 9480843043. e-mail: **dswormgm12@gmail.com**, Website: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- **Joint Director**
Social Welfare Dept., Bangalore South Dist.
DIPR/SAD/624/SA/2025-26

QUICK READ

## 'Guv go back': UP budget session off to fiery start

**LUCKNOW**

The budget session of the Uttar Pradesh legislature got off to a fiery start on Monday with Opposition members raising slogans against Governor Anandiben Patel and the state government as soon as she began her joint address to both the houses. As the Governor started her speech, members of the Samajwadi Party (SP), holding placards and highlighting issues such as rising prices, unemployment, and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, rushed to the well of the house, shouting slogans. While the Governor continued to read her speech, Opposition members raised slogans such as "Governor go back".

## MSRTC names new buses 'Rajmata Jijau'

**MUMBAI**

The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has launched new 3x2 seating buses named 'Rajmata Jijau', after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's mother, Jijabai. Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik said the buses will seat 55 passengers, up from 40 in the 2x2 buses, reducing standing passengers on busy routes. Starting in March, they will be introduced across Maharashtra. The saffron-and-white buses honour Jijabai's legacy and continue MSRTC's tradition of naming services after historic figures like Shivneri and Hirakani.

## Bangladesh voters decide govt, tegional future

**NEW DELHI**

Bangladesh voters will go to the polls on February 12 for the country's 13th national parliamentary election. Citizens will not only choose a new government but also influence regional safety, security, and international relations. The main contest is between two major alliances, one led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the other by its former ally, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. Experts say the outcome could shape both domestic policy and the nation's role in the region.

# J&K govt rules out regularisation of MGNREGA support staff

'Currently, 3,800 personnel are employed on contractual basis under the scheme across J&K and there is no proposal to change their status to regular employees'

**JAMMU**

The Jammu and Kashmir government informed the Legislative Assembly on Monday that it has no proposal to regularise the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) support staff working in the Union Territory.

Currently, around 3,800 personnel are employed on a purely contractual basis under the scheme across J&K.

The information was provided by the Minister Incharge of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in a written reply to MLA Mir Mohammad Fayaz. These support staff are deployed at the panchayat, block, district, divisional, and UT levels, playing a critical role in implementing MGNREGA projects at the grassroots.

The government clarified that all MGNREGA personnel are engaged temporarily, either for the contract period or the scheme's duration, whichever ends first. They do not occupy sanctioned vacancies, and there is no proposal to change their status to regular employees. However, the department noted that the honorarium for these contractual staff has been periodically revised. The latest revision, issued under Government Order No. 49-RD&PR on January 30, 2024, increased monthly payments: Gram Rozgar Sevak from Rs 6,806 to Rs 10,209, Technical Assistant from Rs 11,000 to Rs 16,500, MIS Operator from Rs 11,000 to Rs 13,200, and Administrative/Accounts Assistant from Rs 6,806 to Rs 10,209.

The government added that any future enhancement of honorarium will be considered in subsequent meetings of the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC), ensuring continued support and recognition for the essential work of MGNREGA staff in J&K.

# SIR row: SC issues show-cause notice to Bengal DGP

**NEW DELHI**

**The top court asked him to respond to the Election Commission's affidavit alleging threats and violence against officials engaged in Special Intensive Revision (SIR) duties.**

The Supreme Court on Monday issued a show-cause notice to West Bengal's Director General of Police (DGP) following allegations by the Election Commission of India (ECI) about intimidation and disruptions during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the poll-bound state.

A bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked the DGP to file a personal affidavit addressing claims that, despite complaints, no FIRs were registered against those allegedly burning objection forms and SIR records. The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N.V. Anjaria, recalled a January 19 order directing police to maintain law and order during the process.

To ensure smooth SIR operations, the Supreme Court directed that all 8,505 Group B officers listed for the exercise report to District Electoral Officers (DEOs) or Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) by 5 p.m. on Tuesday. The ECI was granted discretion to replace current EROs and Assistant EROs (AEROs) and use newly available state officers, after brief training if necessary.

The court emphasized that micro-observers and state officials will assist only statutory authorities, with final decisions resting with EROs. To prevent delays, EROs were given one extra week beyond February 14 to complete scrutiny of voter documents.

The apex court noted that some erring officers had suspension recommendations ignored and criticized the transfer of necessary staff during the SIR exercise. The Secretary to the Chief Minister was asked to ensure proper action is taken on such cases. The ECI may replace officers not performing their duties, the court added.

# TVK leader accuses DMK of funding polls with drug trade money

**CHENNAI**

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) General Secretary Aadhav Arjuna on Monday accused the ruling DMK government of failing to provide jobs, ensure women's safety, and control alcohol and drug abuse in Tamil Nadu. Addressing mediapersons, he also alleged that the DMK is using revenue from the ganja trade to fund elections.

Arjuna criticized the party for not fulfilling its election promise of creating 5.5 lakh jobs annually. "By now, nearly 28 lakh people should have received employment in their regime, but that has not happened," he said, adding that the government's failure has

deepened issues related to women's safety and substance abuse across the state.

Highlighting the spread of alcohol and ganja, he recalled that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin had previously promised total prohibition while protesting in black shirts—a promise that Arjuna said remains unfulfilled. He claimed that ganja is sold widely, even near schools, colleges, and TASMAC outlets, generating over Rs 60,000 crore, while only a few low-level offenders have been arrested.

Escalating his allegations, Arjuna claimed that DMK MLAs and MPs are involved in mobilizing large sums of money from the drug trade to fund election campaigns. "The main networks behind this trade are yet to be brought to justice," he said.

Tamil Nadu is expected to go to the polls later this year for the Legislative Assembly elections, and the issue of drug trade and misuse of funds is likely to dominate political debates ahead of the elections.

## Tej Pratap denies relationship, warns of legal action

**PATNA**

Janshakti Janta Dal president Tej Pratap Yadav on Sunday strongly denied claims linking him to his former partner Anushka Yadav, calling them "baseless and misleading." Addressing a press conference, he dismissed rumours that he had a child and alleged the narrative was fabricated to tarnish his reputation.

"A conspiracy is being hatched against me. Some 'Jaichands' are continuously trying to defame me," Yadav said. He further alleged that former RJD MLA Mukesh Roshan, along with Sanjay Yadav, Shakti Singh, and Sunil Singh, were acting against him to damage his public image.

Clarifying his stance, Yadav said he had no connection with the woman in question and warned that he would take legal action against those spreading false information. "I will approach the court against the misinformation being spread about me," he said.

Expressing concern over his safety, Yadav said he had requested security from Bihar Home Minister Samrat Choudhary and would meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi if necessary. He claimed the sustained defamation and pressure were attempts to push him into depression.

# NHRC TAKES SUO MOTU ACTION OVER DELHI MISSING PERSONS CASE

**NEW DELHI**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of reports showing a sharp rise in missing persons cases in Delhi.

Data released by Delhi Police revealed that 807 people went missing during the first two weeks of January 2026, including 191 minors and 616 adults.

Of these, 235 individuals have been traced, while 572 remain unaccounted for. Acting on the matter, the NHRC has issued notices to the Chief Secretary of Delhi and the Commissioner of Police, seeking a detailed report within two weeks. The Commission said the issue, if confirmed, raises serious human rights concerns.

The NHRC's action follows a media report published on February 5, 2026, highlighting the scale of the problem. According to the data, 24,508 people were reported missing in Delhi in 2025, nearly 60 percent of whom were women. While 15,421 individuals were traced, 9,087 cases remain unresolved.

The figures also indicate a troubling trend among teenagers. Reports show that more than 5,000 teenagers, including around 3,500 girls, have gone missing in Delhi each year since 2016, highlighting the vulnerability of minors and young women.

The NHRC emphasized that these numbers require urgent scrutiny and have sought a detailed report from the Delhi government and police.

The report must review actions taken to trace missing persons and outline additional measures being implemented to address the rising trend. The Commission's move underlines growing concern over public safety and human rights in the national capital.

## 'Telangana CM 'shamelessly' indulging in appeasement politics'

**HYDERABAD**

Union Coal Minister and BJP leader G Kishan Reddy on Monday accused Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of "shamelessly" seeking votes by appeasing minorities, referring to him as "Revanth Khan."

Speaking at a roadshow in Ramagundam, about 220 km from Hyderabad, as part of BJP's campaign for the February 11 municipal elections, Kishan Reddy criticized the CM's past comments linking Congress and Muslims.

"The CM is saying my name is not Revanth Reddy, but Revanth Khan. We can see how shamelessly he is speaking for the sake of votes," he said. The remarks were in reference to Revanth Reddy's previous statements that different communities have addressed him with affectionate caste-based titles, such as 'Revanth Yadav', 'Revanth Goud', and 'Sardar Revanth Singh', acknowledging his welfare decisions.

Kishan Reddy also alleged that both BRS and Congress have aligned with AIMIM for electoral gains and accused the parties of weakening the state-run Singareni Collieries for political purposes. He said the Telangana government owes Rs 51,000 crore to the miner, calling it the "sin" of BRS and Congress.

## Reserve EVMs found in Solapur car, SEC clarifies

**SOLAPUR**

Two electronic voting machines (EVMs) were found in a car near a roadside eatery in Solapur district late Saturday night, raising political concerns over polling transparency. Elections to 12 Zilla Parishads and 125 Panchayat Samitis were held on Saturday across Maharashtra.

The machines were discovered around midnight in a vehicle hired for an election official near Hotel Swarajya in Mohol town. Following reports, political parties alleged possible tampering, and an NCP candidate demanded a detailed probe.

The returning officer, tehsildar, and police personnel immediately rushed to the site. A preliminary inquiry confirmed that the EVMs were reserve units and remained sealed. All machines used for polling had already been deposited in the strong room by 10.30 pm.

The Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) clarified that no irregularity occurred during polling. It said strict action would be taken against officials who failed to deposit reserve EVMs on time, but the sanctity of the election process remains intact.

According to the Solapur district collector and Mohol election officer, polling was peaceful on February 7 from 7.30 am to 5.30 pm at all 220 stations in the taluka. The SEC noted that the confusion arose because some reserve EVMs were not immediately placed in the strong room after polling.

# Sharad Pawar hospitalized after breathing trouble

**PUNE**

NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune on Monday after experiencing a persistent cough and difficulty in breathing. The veteran leader was initially at his Baramati residence before being brought to the hospital for urgent medical evaluation.

His symptoms worsened Sunday night, prompting immediate hospitalisation, according to his nephew, Shrinivas Pawar. Purvez Grant, head of Ruby Hall Clinic, has been briefed and will decide whether Pawar needs to remain admitted or can return home after receiving care.

Pawar's daughter, Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule, is accompanying him at the hospital. A team of specialised doctors is closely monitoring his condi-

tion, and several diagnostic tests have already been conducted. Treatment and medication will be determined based on the test results. "The primary concern is a severe cough," Dr. Grant said. "We will examine him and determine the necessary steps. Admission will depend on his clinical condition."

Sharad Pawar has a history of health issues, including oral cancer surgery before 2004, with follow-up treatments in India and the US. His hospital visit comes after recent personal losses, including the tragic death of his nephew and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash.

The Ruby Hall administration confirmed that a thorough medical assessment is underway, and any decision regarding admission will be made after careful evaluation. NCP workers and office-bearers from across Maharashtra have been visiting Pawar to offer support during this period.

CRYPTO FRAUD

# *ED seizes cryptocurrency, cash from call centre*

**HYDERABAD**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized cryptocurrency worth $12,000 and Rs 13.5 lakh unaccounted cash during searches at six Ahmedabad locations linked to illegal call centre operations cheating foreign nationals, mainly from the US.

The Hyderabad Zonal Office conducted the searches on February 4 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

The investigation began following FIRs registered by Cyberabad police and the

CBI, IOD, New Delhi, related to organised cyber fraud and impersonation. ED revealed the call centres were run by accused persons including Mohammed Ansari, Akib Ghanchi, Vikas Kumar, Divyang Raval, and Pradip Rathod along with their associates. The centres shared a common technical setup, trained staff, call scripts, and centralised money-handling.

The operators impersonated US government officials or private company representatives, intimidating victims over loans, taxes, or legal issues, forcing them to buy gift cards or make digital payments. Proceeds were converted into cryptocurrency, including Bitcoin, through online platforms such as Paxful, or handled via cash and informal channels like hawala operators. During the searches, cryptocurrency in Akib Ghanchi's possession and cash totaling Rs 13.5 lakh were seized. Incriminating documents and digital devices were recovered, while 31 bank accounts and a locker of the accused were frozen. ED found that the group accumulated substantial assets in their names, family members, and proxies using proceeds of crime.

The cartel continues similar fraudulent activities using the same methods. ED stated that further investigation is ongoing to identify other accomplices and recover additional assets.

## QUICK READ

### Japan PM Takaichi Wins Historic Landslide Victory

**Tokyo**

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi secured a historic landslide in Monday's parliamentary elections, giving her Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) a two-thirds supermajority in the lower house. The LDP won 316 of 465 seats, its best result since 1955, while coalition partner Japan Innovation Party added 36 seats. Takaichi, Japan's first female prime minister, plans to reappoint her Cabinet, pass a delayed budget, and push key policies to strengthen the economy and military. She pledged to use the mandate to make Japan "strong and prosperous," while seeking some opposition cooperation.

### Mongolia Measles Cases Surge Past Fourteen Thousand

**Ulan Bator**

Mongolia's total measles cases have risen to 14,123, the National Centre for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) reported on Monday. Most new infections occurred among school-age children who had received only one vaccine dose. The NCCD urged parents to ensure children receive two doses to protect against this highly contagious disease. Measles spreads through coughs, sneezes, or contaminated air and surfaces, with one infected person potentially infecting up to 18 others. Vaccination remains the safest way to prevent illness and stop transmission.

### South Korea President Congratulates Japan's Takaichi Victory

**Seoul**

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Monday congratulated Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on her party's landslide election win, wishing for Japan's continued progress under her leadership. Lee posted the message on X after Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party secured a two-thirds majority in the 465-member House of Representatives. He expressed hope for deeper bilateral ties, citing the January summit in Nara as a first step toward shaping the next 60 years of Japan-South Korea relations, and looked forward to hosting Takaichi in Seoul through shuttle diplomacy.

# Iran Refuses Giving Up Uranium Enrichment Talks

Iran insists it will not stop uranium enrichment despite US military threats and ongoing economic sanctions

**TEHRAN**

Iran has ruled out giving up uranium enrichment in its talks with the United States, despite rising tensions in the Middle East. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that US military actions, including the arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea, do not scare Tehran.

Araghchi spoke at a forum in Tehran, emphasizing that Iran has little trust in Washington. He expressed doubt that the US is taking renewed negotiations seriously. On February 6, the two countries resumed talks in Oman for the first time since Israel's 12-day war with Iran in June 2025.

Iran is also consulting with its "strategic partners" China and Russia about the negotiations.

"We refuse to give up enrichment, even if war is imposed on us," Araghchi said. He added that no country has the right to dictate Iran's policies.

The Iranian government is seeking relief from US economic sanctions. Araghchi suggested this could involve "a series of confidence-building measures" concerning Iran's nuclear program. Western nations and Israel suspect Iran wants to build an atomic bomb, but Tehran denies this. "Our atomic bomb is the power to say 'no' to the great powers," Araghchi said.

The US and Israel want the talks to include Iran's ballistic missiles and regional support for armed groups, which Iran refuses. US envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visited the USS Abraham Lincoln last Saturday. Witkoff said the carrier is "keeping us safe and upholding President Trump's message of peace through strength."

Even as President Trump called the talks "very good" and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said they are a "step forward," the threat of war looms. Following the talks, the US imposed fresh tariffs on countries trading with Iran and announced sanctions on shipping entities, aiming to curb Iranian oil exports.

Araghchi concluded that ongoing sanctions and military actions raise doubts about the US's seriousness in pursuing genuine negotiations.

# Sikyong Penpa Tsering Advances Tibet Cause Abroad

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering met US officials and think tanks to discuss Tibet, counter disinformation, and promote religious freedom before traveling to Geneva for international forums**

**WASHINGTON**

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, recently concluded a series of high-level meetings in Washington, DC, aimed at raising global support for the Tibetan cause.

On February 5, he met US Senator Jeff Merkley, a longtime advocate for Tibet and the original sponsor of the bipartisan Resolve Tibet Act of 2024, according to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The meeting highlighted continued US legislative backing for Tibet's cultural and religious rights.

The following day, Sikyong engaged with the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, marking the end of his official US visit. During his stay, he also participated in discussions with leading think tanks about the growing disinformation challenges posed by the People's Republic of China.

Sikyong addressed the International Religious Freedom Conference and took part in a fireside chat at the Atlantic Council, sharing perspectives on Tibetan democracy, leadership succession, and the protection of religious freedom. He was accompanied by Representative Namgyal Choedup of the Office of Tibet, Washington, DC, and President Tencho Gyatso of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Throughout his visit, Sikyong met long-standing supporters from across the US political spectrum and emphasized the importance of sustained legislative and advocacy efforts for Tibet. He also engaged younger members of Congress, urging them to maintain bipartisan support for Tibet in the future.

After concluding his official engagements, Sikyong departed Washington on February 7 to attend the Geneva Forum 2026. Earlier, the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet held discussions on plans to support Tibet amid the Autumn parliamentary session.

The CTA continues to press for genuine autonomy, protection of human rights, religious freedom, and the Tibetan people's right to peacefully determine their future, as China has controlled Tibet since 1950.

## ETGE Commemorates Ghulja Massacre, Calls For Action

**WASHINGTON**

The East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE) marked the 29th anniversary of the 1997 Ghulja Massacre, calling for decisive international action against China's policies in East Turkistan, according to a post on X.

The commemoration honored victims of one of the most serious atrocities committed by Chinese authorities in occupied East Turkistan. On February 5, 1997, thousands of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic peoples staged a peaceful protest in Ghulja against political, religious, and cultural repression. Chinese forces responded with live fire, mass arrests, and alleged executions, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands detained or disappeared. ETGE described the massacre as a precursor to a wider genocidal campaign that intensified after 2014.

Events were organized in Washington, DC, and internationally, including gatherings outside the US Department of State. ETGE stressed that remembrance should lead to accountability and concrete measures.

*Human Rights Watch reports China deepened control in 2025, suppressing freedoms and targeting minorities severely*

## China Intensifies Repression Nationwide, Human Rights Watch Reports

**BANGKOK**

The Chinese government significantly intensified repression across the country in 2025, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in its World Report 2026. Under President Xi Jinping, authorities tightened ideological control and curtailed fundamental freedoms, particularly targeting minority and religious communities.

HRW highlighted that Tibetans, Uyghurs, members of unofficial Christian churches, and other minority groups faced the harshest violations. The report also noted a sharp rise in repression in Hong Kong. "The Chinese government under Xi Jinping has amassed an increasingly disastrous human rights record," said Maya Wang, HRW Deputy Asia Director. She added that foreign governments have largely failed to counter Beijing's growing threats to international human rights.

The 529-page report, HRW's 36th edition, reviews human rights in over 100 countries. Executive Director Philippe Bolopion warned that reversing global authoritarian trends is a generational challenge, urging democracies and civil society to form strategic alliances to defend freedoms.

Xi Jinping's visits to Tibet in August and Xinjiang in September 2025 aimed to showcase strict state control. Authorities plan new laws to further repress minorities, strengthen ideological oversight, and expand China's influence abroad. Thousands of Uyghurs reportedly remain imprisoned, while Dalai Lama birthday celebrations were banned in Tibet.

In Hong Kong, repression intensified under the National Security Law. The League of Social Democrats disbanded, and several pro-democracy figures, including Jimmy Lai, remain imprisoned. HRW reported campaigns to "sinicize" religions, forcing churches to align with party ideology. Dozens of Protestant church members were arrested or sentenced on charges such as fraud.

HRW also documented arbitrary detentions, including harassment of overseas activists and their families. Cases included the arrest of France-based student Tara Zhang Yadi and pressure on filmmakers linked to the IndieChina festival in New York.

The report called on Beijing to end abuses in Xinjiang, repeal Hong Kong's security laws, allow independent observers in Tibet and Xinjiang, and release detained human rights defenders.

## BNM PROTESTS GERMANY HIGHLIGHT BALOCHISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

**MUNICH**

The Baloch National Movement (BNM) organized a protest at Porta Nigra Square in Trier, Germany, to draw attention to alleged human rights violations in Balochistan, according to a post shared by the group on X. Human rights activists and Baloch supporters participated, raising concerns about enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and state repression of political activists and human rights defenders. BNM claimed these actions were carried out systematically by the Pakistani state. Protesters urged the international community, media, and human rights organizations to acknowledge the ongoing situation in the region. Placards, banners, and speeches highlighted the impact on women, children, and families of the disappeared. Speakers stressed that families, especially mothers and children, have long sought justice and the safe return of their loved ones through peaceful means but often face collective punishment instead. BNM leaders, including Luqman Baloch, Wajahat Baloch, Asif Baloch, Mujeeb Abdullah, Shariq Baloch, and Habib Baloch, condemned enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and civilian-targeted operations.

## FGEHA Housing Projects Bhara Kahu Face Major Delays

**ISLAMABAD**

The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) housing projects in Bhara Kahu are facing significant delays, causing frustration among allottees and members.

The Sky Gardens and Green Enclave projects have missed their scheduled completion deadlines, with construction progressing slowly. Sky Gardens, a joint venture signed on October 11, 2019, with M/s Commoners Sky Gardens, covers around 11,000 kanals in Mauza Kathar and Mengal, Murree. Phase I of the project is about 40 percent complete, while Phase II stands at 42 percent. Sector A work is finished, and 80 plots were handed over on July 3, 2025. Blocks G and D are expected to be ready by March 2026.

Green Enclave-I, launched in 2009, has faced prolonged delays due to legal disputes and disagreements between the government and contractors. Although construction resumed later, the project remains incomplete.FGEHA, under the Ministry of Housing, has struggled to complete several housing and apartment schemes on time. Other delayed or stalled projects include F-14 and F-15 sectors, Lifestyle Afro Apartments, Park Road Housing Scheme, and Skyline Apartments in Chaklala. Development has not yet started in F-12 and G-12 due to land acquisition issues. However, the authority has recently taken steps to speed up progress. Infrastructure development contracts worth approximately Rs19 billion have been awarded for F-14 and F-15, and contractors have been mobilized to begin work. Allottees remain concerned about delays and uncertainty over possession dates, highlighting the need for stricter monitoring and timely completion of FGEHA projects to meet public expectations.

## SU DO KU

**Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?**

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Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

**Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.**

**SPACEX GOAL**

# *Elon Musk Plans Self-Growing City on Moon Soon*

**CAPE CANAVERAL**

Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX, recently shared exciting news for space lovers on his social media platform X. On Sunday, he revealed that SpaceX is now focusing on creating a "self-growing city" on the Moon. Musk said this project could be completed in less than ten years.

In his post, Musk explained that reaching Mars is more difficult because trips are only possible when the planets align every 26 months, taking about six months per journey. In contrast, launches to the Moon could happen every 10 days and take only two days to arrive. This faster schedule, he said, allows SpaceX to build a Moon city much more quickly than a Mars city.

Musk also emphasized that SpaceX's main goal remains to extend human life and consciousness to the stars. He said the company would eventually work on a Mars city, aiming to start within five to seven years, but the Moon is the first priority due to its faster timeline.

The announcement supports a report from the Wall Street Journal earlier this month. According to the report, SpaceX informed investors that it is prioritizing the Moon before focusing on Mars.

Building a city on the Moon is not without competition. The United States faces significant challenges from China, which is also planning crewed lunar missions. The last human landing on the Moon was the U.S. Apollo mission in 1972, making these upcoming projects especially significant.

Musk's bold vision for a self-growing Moon city highlights how private companies are increasingly leading space exploration. If successful, it could mark the start of a new era in human space settlement.

# India-US Trade Deal Opens Vast American Export Market

## Landmark trade pact lowers duties, expands US access for Indian goods

**NEW DELHI**

The India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement marks a major step in India's global trade strategy and gives exporters steady and preferred access to the huge US market valued at over $30 trillion. An official statement said the deal brings wide tariff cuts, zero-duty access for many products, stronger digital and technology cooperation, and safeguards for farmers, small businesses, and domestic industry. India exported goods worth $86.35 billion to the United States in 2024. Under the new agreement, several sectors will become more competitive. Tariffs on $30.94 billion worth of exports have been cut from 50 per cent to 18 per cent, while duties on another $10.03 billion have been reduced to zero. This will allow many Indian products to enter the US at lower prices. Textiles and apparel, which employ millions, will see duties fall sharply, while silk products will enjoy zero duty in a large US market. Machinery exports will also benefit, with tariffs lowered to 18 per cent, opening new opportunities in a market worth $477 billion.

Leather and footwear exports have gained strongly, with India becoming a preferred supplier as duties drop to 18 per cent in a $42 billion market. This is expected to boost jobs, especially in MSMEs and manufacturing clusters.

Gems and jewellery exports will see similar gains, with tariffs reduced to 18 per cent and zero duty access for diamonds, platinum, and coins. Agricultural exports worth $1.36 billion will enter the US without additional duties, helping spices, tea, coffee, fruits, nuts, and processed foods. Sensitive sectors like dairy, meat, poultry, and cereals remain fully protected. The agreement also creates an advantage as rival exporting nations continue facing higher tariffs in the American market compared with India's products.

### India Adopts Decade-Long Tariff Elimination Plan

The Government of India has announced a structured approach to agricultural market access under the India US Bilateral Trade Agreement, combining immediate duty elimination, phased cuts over up to ten years, tariff reductions, and quota mechanisms while protecting sensitive crops. Highly sensitive sectors such as meat, poultry, dairy, GM foods, maize, millets, pulses, certain fruits, oilseeds, honey, ethanol, tobacco, and selected animal feed remain fully protected under an exemption category. Products used by India's food processing industry, including albumins, coconut oil, castor oil, stearin, and modified starches, will see phased tariff elimination over a decade, providing domestic stakeholders time to adjust.

Certain sensitive items, including olives, pyrethrum, and parts of plants, have received measured tariff reductions, while select goods like in-shell almonds, walnuts, pistachios, and lentils will enter via Tariff Rate Quotas at reduced duties. Alcoholic beverages will follow tariff reduction and minimum import price guidelines, consistent with India's earlier trade agreements.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said Indian agricultural exports to the US will face lower reciprocal tariffs than competitors, with items such as tea, coffee, spices, coconut, coconut oil, and vegetable wax enjoying zero-duty access. India currently maintains a USD 1.3 billion trade surplus in agricultural trade with the US, exporting USD 3.4 billion and importing USD 2.1 billion in 2024.

Goyal assured that India's farmers, MSMEs, artisans, and craftsmen would not face losses, while benefiting from broader US market access, ensuring a careful balance between opening markets and protecting domestic agriculture.

# Chidambaram Calls Budget Forgettable, Flags Job Crisis

**NEW DELHI**

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, Congress leader and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram described the Union Budget 2026-27 as cautious, parsimonious, and forgettable, claiming it is already fading from public memory. He said the government appeared unwilling to confront hard truths highlighted in the Economic Survey, questioning whether ministers had even read the lengthy document.

Chidambaram pointed to three major problems identified in the survey, capital investment, unemployment, and slowing growth, and argued the Budget failed on all three fronts. He noted that gross fixed capital formation remains around 30 per cent of GDP, while net foreign investment has fallen sharply to negligible levels. Despite companies holding cash, private investment is weak, and capital spending was cut by Rs 0.44 lakh crore without clear reasons.

On jobs, he said youth unemployment is 15 per cent, regular jobs cover less than a quarter of workers, and factory employment remains tiny. He criticised the PM Internship Scheme, saying most offers were rejected and only a few thousand interns were finally retained. Chidambaram accused the Budget of forgetting promises, pointing to low funding or cuts in defence, science, welfare, and urban development.

On growth, he said nominal GDP growth is slowing steadily, while official real growth numbers appear overstated and unconvincing. He added that fiscal repair is weak, with only marginal deficit reduction, and claimed the Budget survived mainly due to spending cuts and a large RBI dividend. He concluded the Budget lacks vision, avoids real problems, and will soon be forgotten as new issues dominate headlines. He urged the government to rethink priorities, invest boldly, create quality jobs, and restore confidence among workers, investors, and young citizens across the country.

Former finance minister P Chidambaram strongly criticised the Union Budget, saying it ignores jobs, investment, and growth challenges facing India

## QUICK READ

### Income Tax Forms Renumbered To Ease Compliance

**Mumbai**

The Income Tax Department has proposed new draft rules to renumber many tax forms as the Income-tax Act, 2025 starts on April 1. Officials said the change will make filing clearer and reduce confusion built over years. Several audit, TDS and international tax forms will be merged or given new numbers. The move will support better data matching, but employers and tax professionals must update their systems quickly. Taxpayers are expected to benefit from simpler compliance and fewer reporting errors.

### Yotta Moves Bhashini Fully To Indian Cloud

**New Delhi**

Yotta Data Services announced it has deployed the full BHASHINI AI system on its Government Community Cloud and Shakti Cloud. This move shifts all language data, models and user interactions to Indian servers and GPUs. Officials said the change improves speed by up to 40 per cent, cuts costs by 20 to 30 per cent, and ensures 99.99 per cent uptime. The migration was completed without data loss and supports India's goal of building secure, sovereign AI for public use.

### DIIs Increase Hold Over Indian Stock Market

**Mumbai**

Domestic institutional investors strengthened their position in Indian equities during 2025, a report said on Monday. DIIs invested $90.1 billion during the year, helped by steady inflows into mutual fund SIPs. Their buying offset foreign investor outflows of $18.8 billion and absorbed heavy IPO and FPO activity worth Rs 1.95 trillion. DII ownership in Nifty 500 firms rose to a record 20.6 per cent in December 2025, while FII ownership stayed lower at 18.4 per cent, reflecting a clear shift in market control.

## US tariff cut lifts India's AYUSH exports

**AHMEDABAD**

India's AYUSH and nutraceutical sectors are set to benefit from US tariff reductions under the India–US Interim Trade Deal, said Lal Hingorani, Founder of Pharmanza Herbal Pvt Ltd. He noted that earlier tariffs of 50 per cent had strained exporters with thin margins, and the cut to 18 per cent will provide immediate relief. However, Hingorani said pricing pressures remain, as buyers seek low costs while exporters face high expenses due to FDA compliance and quality standards. The AYUSH sector—covering Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy—plays a major role in India's herbal exports. In FY25, AYUSH exports to the US reached USD 688.89 million, growing 6.11 per cent, led by products such as Ashwagandha, Turmeric, Ginger, Neem, Tulsi, Brahmi, and Shatavari. Announced on February 6, 2026, the interim deal is the first step toward a broader bilateral trade agreement. It includes tariff rationalisation, removal of non-tariff barriers, rules of origin, supply chain cooperation, and digital trade provisions. The US has also withdrawn an additional 25 per cent duty, boosting India's competitiveness.

*Trade agreements open Indian and global markets, creating strong opportunities, says Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran*

# Stalin Inaugurates Tata JLR Plant, Calls It Golden Day

**RANIPET**

Chief Minister MK Stalin described the start of vehicle production by Tata Motors in Ranipet as a major industrial achievement for Tamil Nadu. Addressing the inauguration of the Tata Motors passenger vehicle and Jaguar Land Rover plant at Panapakkam, he called the occasion a "golden day" for the state. He thanked the Tata Group for investing Rs 9,000 crore in the district and said the company's confidence in Tamil Nadu reflected the state's strong industrial environment.

Stalin said he was pleased that Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran personally attended the event, recalling his earlier request for him to be present when manufacturing began. He highlighted the Tata Group's contribution to India's development in sectors such as steel, IT, and automobiles, and praised the brand for its quality and reputation.

Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said trade deals with the US, EU, UK, and UAE open global and Indian markets, creating huge opportunities. He praised the new Rs 9,000 crore Tata JLR plant in Tamil Nadu, which will produce ICE and electric vehicles, generating 5,000 jobs.

The Chief Minister noted that Tamil Nadu has a long association with the Tata Group and remains a leading hub for automobile and electric vehicle manufacturing. He welcomed Tata JLR into the state's expanding auto ecosystem and said the rollout of the first Land Rover vehicle was a moment of pride.

He attributed the state's progress to the Dravidian Model of governance and stressed the importance of converting investment agreements into operational projects. Stalin said the government would continue supporting investors, promoting women's empowerment, and organising an investors' meet. He encouraged Tata to expand further, particularly in research and development. The new greenfield plant will make conventional and electric vehicles and is expected to create about 5,000 direct jobs, strengthening regional growth and supply chains.

# Indian Equities Safer From AI Bubble Risks

**NEW DELHI**

Indian equity markets are relatively shielded from potential AI bubble risks, says a report by Motilal Oswal Private Wealth. The report highlights that India's limited exposure to pure-play AI companies and a balanced market structure make it less vulnerable compared with global tech-heavy markets.

According to the data, while US "MAG7" stocks have a combined market value of USD 19.4 trillion—comparable to China's GDP and much higher than India's USD 4 trillion GDP—Indian markets remain less concentrated, reducing extreme valuation risks. Historical comparisons show that during the 1996–2000 dot-com boom, the Nasdaq 100 surged 643 per cent, whereas the Nifty 50 rose just 80 per cent. When the bubble burst, Nasdaq fell 75 per cent, but the Nifty dropped only 39 per cent, and in the recovery phase, Nifty outperformed significantly. Looking at recent trends from 2016 to 2026, Nasdaq returned 494 per cent versus Nifty 246 per cent, but its PE ratio expanded 88 per cent compared with 28 per cent for the Nifty 50. This indicates lower valuation froth in Indian equities.

The report concludes that India's diversified market, with less dependence on a few high-value technology stocks, provides resilience against sharp corrections. Investors in Indian markets are thus less exposed to the boom-bust cycles seen in global AI-driven stocks, making them relatively safer amid rising excitement around artificial intelligence.

## Adani Secures Japanese Financing For Green Corridor

**AHMEDABAD**

Adani Energy Solutions (AESL) has obtained long-term funding from Japanese banks for its flagship high-voltage direct current (HVDC) green corridor project, aimed at enhancing renewable power flow in northern India. The 950-kilometre corridor will connect Bhadla, Rajasthan, to Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, with a 6,000 MW evacuation capacity.

Scheduled for commissioning by 2029, the HVDC network will integrate large-scale renewable energy into India's national grid, supporting grid stability and meeting growing clean energy demand. The corridor leverages advanced HVDC technology from Hitachi in collaboration with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), strengthening domestic manufacturing under the Make-in-India initiative.

The financing is led by MUFG Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, highlighting strong international confidence in India's renewable infrastructure. AESL said the project aligns with its sustainable debt framework and Equator Principles, allowing lenders to classify it as a Green Loan. Legal advisory was provided by Latham & Watkins and Saraf & Partners for the borrower, and Linklaters and Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas for the lenders.

Kandarp Patel, AESL CEO, called the project a "defining step" in building India's green transmission backbone, emphasizing the depth of India-Japan collaboration in clean energy. The initiative forms part of Adani Group's integrated clean energy platform, complementing Adani Green Energy Limited projects and Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited, which already integrates over 40 per cent renewable energy into its supply mix.

The corridor is expected to become a key transmission artery, enabling sustainable energy delivery to industrial and urban centres, accelerating India's energy transition, and reinforcing the country's commitment to a resilient, low-carbon power infrastructure.

## Pakistan's Trade Deficit Soars Amid Export Decline

**NEW DELHI**

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries widened sharply by 44.42 per cent to $7.683 billion in the first half of fiscal year 2025–26 (July–December), compared with $5.32 billion in the same period last year, according to State Bank of Pakistan data.

The widening gap was largely driven by falling exports, especially to China, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. Trade with Afghanistan has been suspended since October 10, 2025, further limiting export flows. While exports to India rose marginally in percentage terms, their overall value remained insignificant. Exports to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also declined during the period.

Total exports to Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives dropped 18.56 per cent to $1.965 billion from $2.413 billion a year earlier. In contrast, imports from these countries rose 24.76 per cent to $9.648 billion from $7.733 billion.

China continued to dominate Pakistan's imports, which increased 25.61 per cent, while exports to China declined, highlighting persistent challenges in regional trade.

## Gold, Silver Bounce Back After Volatile Week

**MUMBAI**

Gold and silver prices rebounded in Asian trade on Monday after last week's sharp swings, driven by weak safe-haven demand, profit booking, and uncertainty over US monetary policy.

Spot gold climbed 1.6 per cent to $5,038.38 an ounce, while April gold futures rose 1.7 per cent to $5,064.04. Silver gained more sharply, with spot prices surging 5.3 per cent to $82.178 an ounce, recovering from last week's lows near $60. Platinum remained largely unchanged around $2,105 an ounce.

Last week, precious metals saw wild swings after the nomination of Kevin Warsh

as US Federal Reserve chairman boosted the dollar, prompting investors to book profits following recent rallies. Despite the correction, gold and silver are still up around 15 per cent and 5 per cent respectively this year, though below record highs reached in early February.

Analysts say institutional interest in gold remains strong. Data shows the People's Bank of China bought gold for the fifteenth consecutive month in January, while central banks globally continue purchases amid rising fiscal spending and economic uncertainty.

Safe-haven demand eased slightly after the US and Iran indicated progress in nuclear talks, agreeing to continue discussions. Market watchers now await US non-farm payrolls on Wednesday, CPI data on Friday, and Chinese inflation figures later this week, which could influence interest rate expectations and global stimulus outlooks.

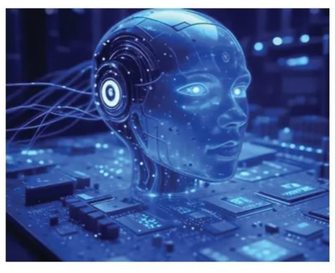
Investors remain cautious as dollar movements, trade developments, and policy signals continue to drive precious metal market volatility.

**SARVAM BEATS GIANTS**

# *Indian Startup Sarvam Beats Global AI Rivals*

**MUMBAI**

Bengaluru based startup Sarvam AI has said its new vision and speech models perform better than major global rivals in key tests for Indian languages. The company claimed its systems beat Google Gemini and ChatGPT in optical character recognition and text to speech benchmarks. In a social media post, co founder Pratyush Kumar said Sarvam Vision reached 84.3 per cent accuracy



on the olmOCR Bench English subset, crossing results posted by larger frontier models.

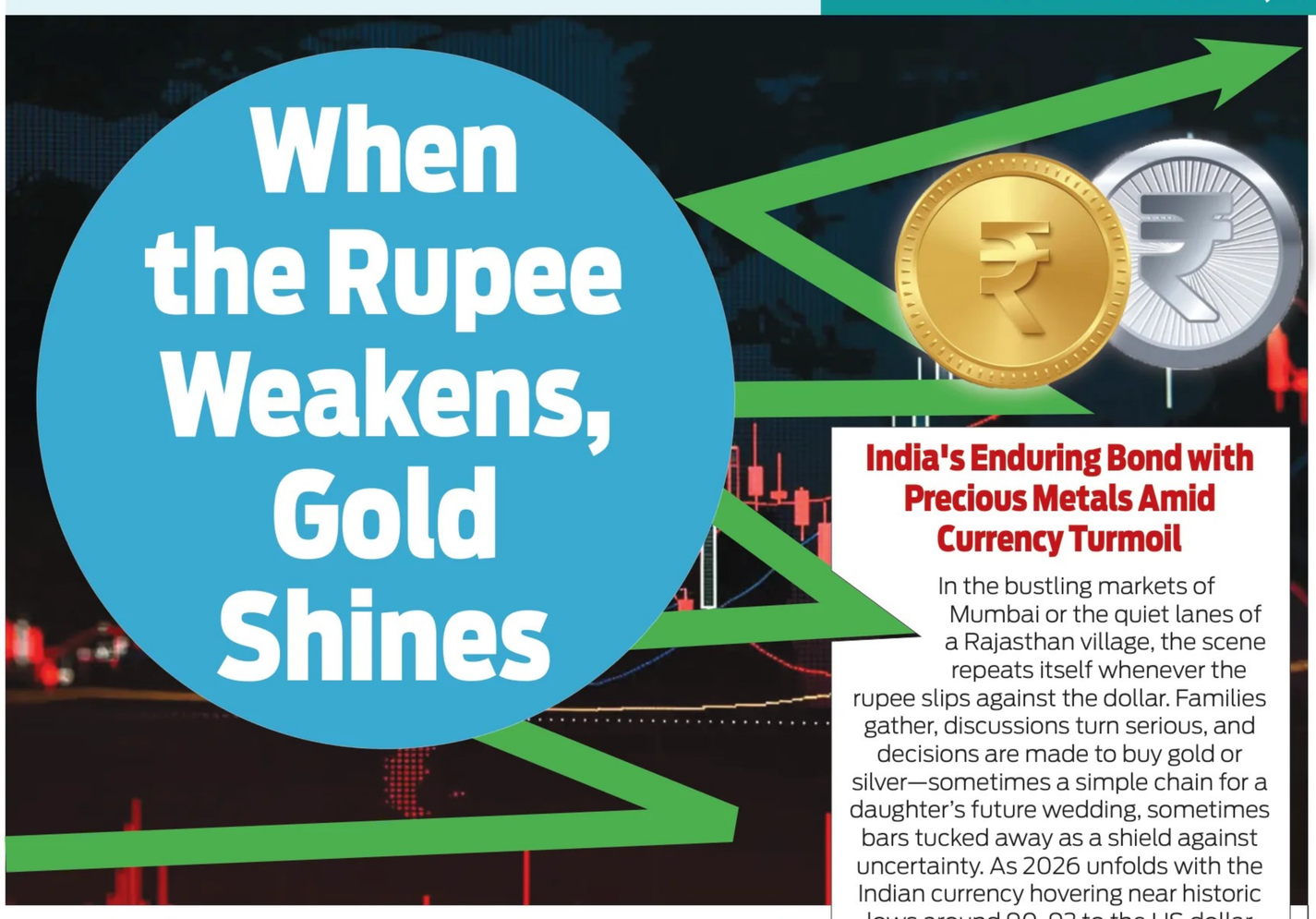
On another test, OmniDocBench version 1.5, the model scored 93.28 per cent overall, showing strong ability in reading complex formulas, charts, and page layouts. Kumar said the Bulbul V3 text to speech system supports 35 voices and works across all 22 scheduled Indian languages, even with low quality scans.

He added that Sarvam Vision is currently the strongest model for Indian language documents. The Vision series uses a three billion parameter model that can caption images, read scene text, understand charts, and parse difficult tables. Examples shared online showed accurate extraction of technical data from merged tables and charts from the latest Economic Survey.

Sarvam AI said its goal is to make artificial intelligence useful and accessible across India by building tools suited to local needs. Union IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw also praised the work, saying it reflects the growing strength of India's national AI mission.

The startup said its research focuses on practical use cases such as governance, education, and business documents. By supporting every scheduled language, the tools aim to reduce dependence on foreign platforms and help citizens, firms, and public offices adopt digital services with greater trust, speed, and linguistic inclusion nationwide. Officials said the achievement signals rapid progress nationwide.

# When the Rupee Weakens, Gold Shines

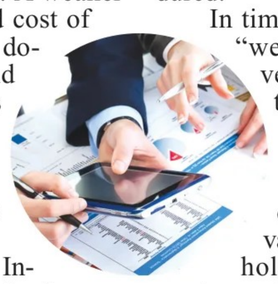


## India's Enduring Bond with Precious Metals Amid Currency Turmoil

In the bustling markets of Mumbai or the quiet lanes of a Rajasthan village, the scene repeats itself whenever the rupee slips against the dollar. Families gather, discussions turn serious, and decisions are made to buy gold or silver—sometimes a simple chain for a daughter's future wedding, sometimes bars tucked away as a shield against uncertainty. As 2026 unfolds with the Indian currency hovering near historic lows around 90-92 to the US dollar after a roughly 5 percent depreciation in the previous year, precious metals have once again emerged as the trusted refuge. What was once primarily ornamental has become a sophisticated financial strategy, blending centuries-old culture with modern economic anxieties. This is not mere sentiment. When the rupee loses ground, the cost of importing gold and silver—so essential since India produces little domestically—rises sharply. Global prices, quoted in dollars, translate into steeper rupee figures. But the story runs deeper: inflation erodes savings in bank accounts, geopolitical storms rattle confidence, and paper currency feels less reliable. Households, retailers, and even institutions turn to the tangible gleam of bullion. This feature explores the intertwined psychology, economics, culture, and global forces driving India's precious metals surge as the rupee faces pressure.

## The Safe-Haven Instinct: Psychology Meets Economics

At its core, the rush to gold and silver during currency stress reflects a primal human response: the desire for stability when systems wobble. Economically, precious metals serve as a hedge against depreciation and inflation. A weaker rupee increases the landed cost of imports, directly inflating domestic prices. Yet demand often holds firm or rises because buyers view these metals as stores of value that preserve purchasing power when fiat currencies falter.



Consider the mechanics. India's persistent trade deficits, fueled partly by energy and commodity imports, exert downward pressure on the rupee. Higher global interest rates or capital outflows exacerbate this. In such environments, gold shines because it has no counterparty risk—no government or bank can default on it. Silver follows a similar logic but with added industrial appeal. Psychologically, this taps into generational memory. Indians recall periods of high inflation or economic shocks where paper savings lost value while family gold endured.

In times of rupee weakness, the "wealth effect" works in reverse for currency but positively for bullion holders. A middle-class professional watching the rupee slide might see stock portfolios or fixed deposits lose real value to inflation, while gold holdings appreciate in local terms. This behavioral shift is pronounced among retail investors, who increasingly treat these metals as portfolio diversifiers rather than mere heirlooms. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle: depreciation lifts prices, which validates the safe-haven narrative, encouraging more buying.

## DOLLAR DOMINANCE AND THE GLOBAL CURRENCY BACKDROP

The US dollar remains the world's primary reserve currency, and its movements profoundly influence Indian markets. When the dollar strengthens—often due to higher US interest rates or safe-haven flows during global uncertainty—the rupee typically weakens.

This dynamic directly inflates the rupee price of gold and silver, even if international bullion quotes remain steady.

In recent years, global monetary policy divergences have played a starring role. Periods of elevated US rates drew capital away from emerging markets like India, pressuring the currency.

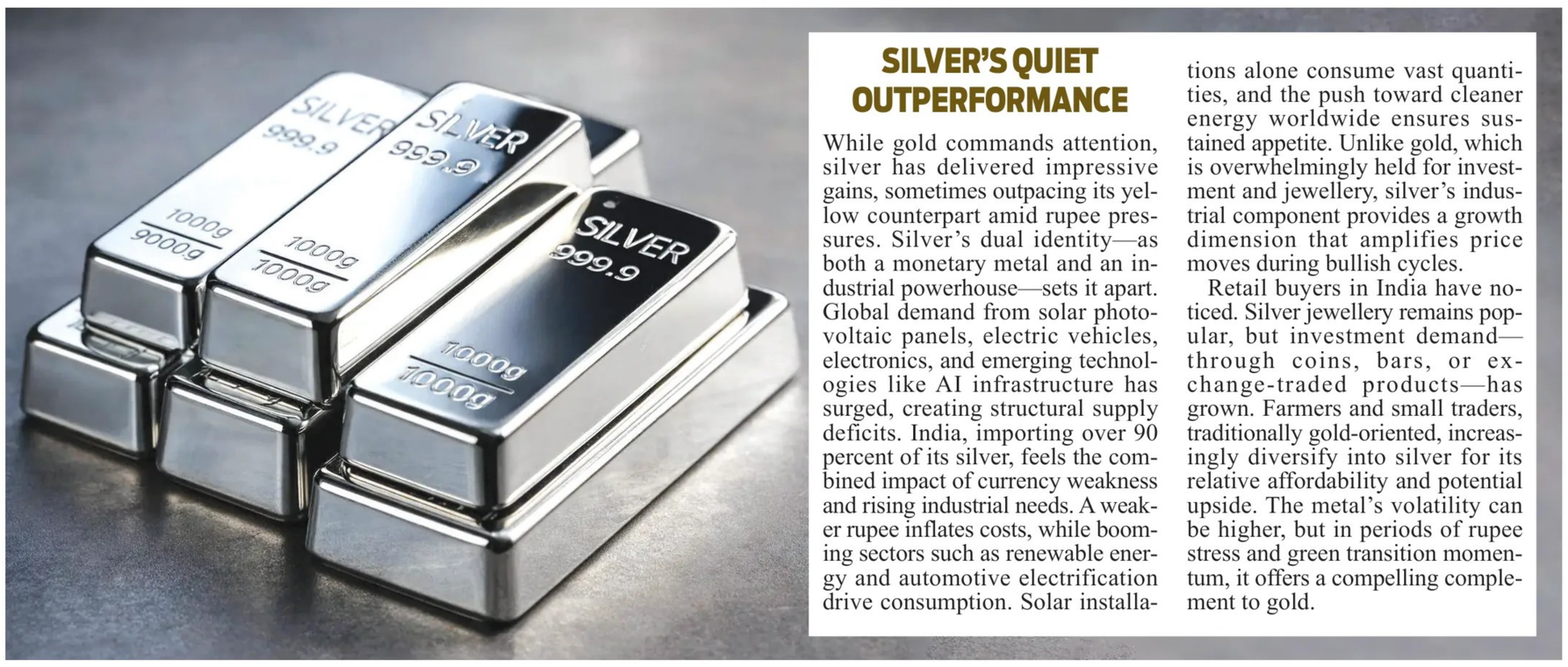
Trade tensions and tariff uncertainties added volatility, prompting investors worldwide to seek protection in precious metals. For India, the effect is amplified: as one of the largest importers, rupee depreciation raises the import bill, widening the trade gap and further weighing on the currency.

Central banks globally have responded by diversifying reserves away from pure dollar assets toward gold. This institutional buying supports prices, creating a tailwind for Indian buyers. Meanwhile, capital flows respond to interest rate differentials and growth outlooks. A resilient Indian economy attracts some investment, but persistent external vulnerabilities—such as oil dependence—keep the rupee sensitive.

The interplay means that even modest dollar strength can translate into significant local price spikes for bullion, turning global macro events into household realities.

## From Wedding Gold to Wealth Protection

Gold's role in Indian society has long centered on culture. Weddings, festivals like Diwali and Akshaya Tritiya, and rituals demand jewellery, sustaining baseline demand. Yet a notable evolution is underway. As the rupee faces repeated bouts of weakness, families increasingly view gold purchases through a dual lens: tradition plus financial prudence. What was once bought primarily for adornment or status now doubles as an inflation hedge and legacy asset. Parents setting aside gold for a child's marriage recognize its portability and universal acceptance—qualities that shine during economic stress. In rural areas, where banking access may be limited or trust in financial institutions varies, physical gold remains the preferred store of wealth. Urban professionals, facing volatile equity markets or real estate illiquidity, allocate portions of savings to bullion or related instruments.



## SILVER'S QUIET OUTPERFORMANCE

While gold commands attention, silver has delivered impressive gains, sometimes outpacing its yellow counterpart amid rupee pressures. Silver's dual identity—as both a monetary metal and an industrial powerhouse—sets it apart. Global demand from solar photovoltaic panels, electric vehicles, electronics, and emerging technologies like AI infrastructure has surged, creating structural supply deficits. India, importing over 90 percent of its silver, feels the combined impact of currency weakness and rising industrial needs. A weaker rupee inflates costs, while booming sectors such as renewable energy and automotive electrification drive consumption. Solar installations alone consume vast quantities, and the push toward cleaner energy worldwide ensures sustained appetite. Unlike gold, which is overwhelmingly held for investment and jewellery, silver's industrial component provides a growth dimension that amplifies price moves during bullish cycles.

Retail buyers in India have noticed. Silver jewellery remains popular, but investment demand—through coins, bars, or exchange-traded products—has grown. Farmers and small traders, traditionally gold-oriented, increasingly diversify into silver for its relative affordability and potential upside. The metal's volatility can be higher, but in periods of rupee stress and green transition momentum, it offers a compelling complement to gold.

## Rupee's Struggles Across Currencies

- The rupee's challenges extend beyond the dollar. Depreciation against the euro, pound sterling, yen, and other majors compounds the effect on imported commodities like precious metals. Since global bullion markets price primarily in dollars, the USD-INR rate dominates.
- However, broader weakness signals systemic pressures—higher domestic inflation relative to trading partners, trade imbalances, and occasional risk-off sentiment in global markets.
- For instance, when the rupee slides against the euro or pound, it affects costs for European or British tourists or exporters, but the bullion link remains most direct via the dollar.
- A multi-currency lens reveals India's vulnerability to external shocks: oil priced in dollars, gold in dollars, and capital flows influenced by major central bank policies.
- Each dip in the rupee's value against this basket makes everyday imports costlier and boosts the appeal of assets that hold intrinsic worth independent of any single currency.

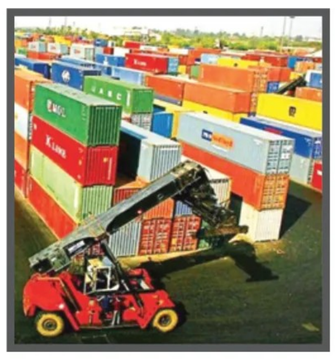
## Questioning Faith in Paper Currency

- Gold's rise amid rupee weakness raises deeper questions about trust in fiat money.
- In an era of expanding money supplies and occasional fiscal strains, tangible assets offer psychological comfort.
- Central banks worldwide, including India's, have increased gold allocations in reserves, signaling institutional acknowledgment of diversification needs.
- For ordinary citizens, this manifests as a quiet preference for assets immune to debasement.
- Decades of gradual rupee depreciation have taught lessons: savings in bank deposits may yield nominal interest, but real returns can erode.
- Gold and silver, by contrast, have historically preserved value across generations.
- This erosion of confidence is not panic-driven but a measured response to observed realities—currency volatility, inflation spikes, and global uncertainties.

## Imports, Trade Deficits, and the Bullion Rally

India's heavy reliance on gold and silver imports creates a feedback loop with the rupee. High volumes—gold imports reaching tens of billions of dollars annually, with silver showing even sharper percentage increases—widen the trade deficit. This deficit pressures the currency, raising import costs in a vicious circle that fuels higher local prices and sustains the rally.

Inflation adds fuel. Rising bullion prices can feed into broader price expectations, though their direct weight in consumer baskets is modest. Policymakers monitor this closely, occasionally adjusting duties or intervening in forex markets to stabilize the rupee. Yet demand resilience, driven by cultural and hedging motives, limits the effectiveness of such measures. The result is a bullion market that thrives even as authorities grapple with external balances.



## Global Chaos, Local Consequences

Wars, trade disputes, rate cycles, and shifting alliances reverberate in Indian bullion shops. Geopolitical tensions elevate safe-haven demand worldwide, lifting dollar-denominated prices. A weaker dollar in some phases can further boost gold, while persistent risks keep buyers engaged. For India, events half a world away—conflicts affecting energy prices or supply chains—translate into costlier imports and a softer rupee, reinforcing the metals' allure.

Recent years illustrate this transmission: tariff uncertainties, regional conflicts, and policy shifts have all contributed to volatility that funnels capital toward precious metals. Indian investors, attuned to these global currents through media and markets, respond by securing physical assets.

### Retail Investors and Institutional Players

Households remain the dominant force, holding vast quantities—tens of thousands of tonnes collectively, representing enormous wealth. This grassroots demand often exceeds official buying. The central bank maintains significant reserves, around 880 tonnes, whose value has risen with prices and supports overall forex buffers. Globally, central banks have been net buyers, providing a floor under prices.

The contrast is instructive: retail buyers seek protection and tradition, while institutions pursue diversification and reserve management. Together, they create robust demand that sustains rallies even amid temporary corrections.

## Looking Beyond the Dollar

While the dollar-rupee axis is central, rupee movements against the pound, euro, yen, and others reshape investment calculus. Broader depreciation signals the need for assets uncorrelated with any single currency regime. Investors increasingly consider multi-currency exposures, but gold and silver retain primacy for their universal acceptance and historical role.

This perspective encourages portfolio rethinking: blending bullion with equities, bonds, and other hedges to navigate an era of currency flux.

### Reflections on an Uncertain Future

As the rupee navigates ongoing challenges, gold and silver's shine persists. Cultural roots, economic necessities, and global forces converge to make precious metals more than ornaments—they are shields, legacies, and stores of hope. Policymakers face the delicate task of managing imports and deficits without stifling legitimate demand, while families weigh tradition against opportunity.

The outlook remains dynamic. Structural drivers like industrial needs for silver and diversification for gold suggest sustained relevance. Yet volatility is inherent; corrections can occur with stronger currencies or resolved uncertainties. For millions of Indians, the lesson endures: when currencies waver, the enduring metals offer reassurance.

In homes across the nation, the quiet accumulation continues—not out of fear alone, but from a deep-seated wisdom that some values transcend paper and policy.

# Man City snatch chaotic 2-1 win at Liverpool

Haaland penalty stuns Anfield as City claw back to revive title chase

**LIVERPOOL**

Erling Haaland's stoppage-time penalty capped a breathless finale as Manchester City pulled off a dramatic 2-1 comeback win against Liverpool at Anfield, keeping the Premier League title race alive and trimming the gap to leaders Arsenal to six points.

Liverpool looked set for a crucial victory after Dominik Szoboszlai broke the deadlock in the 74th minute with a sublime, swerving free kick that left City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma rooted to the spot. The goal ignited Anfield and appeared to push Pep Guardiola's side towards a damaging nine-point deficit in the title race.

City, however, responded with trademark resilience. Bernardo Silva led the charge, equalising late when Haaland smartly headed a cross into his path for a close-range finish. The pressure mounted in a chaotic closing stretch that saw controversy, VAR drama and raw emotion spill across the pitch.

Deep into stoppage time, City were handed a lifeline when Matheus Nunes was brought down by Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson after being sent through on the right. Haaland stepped up and calmly converted the penalty — his 21st league goal of the season — silencing the Anfield crowd and scoring his first Premier League goal at the famous ground.

Moments earlier, City's Rayan Cherki appeared to have scored from near the halfway line after Alisson had ventured forward, but the goal was ruled out following a VAR check. Szoboszlai was also sent off in the aftermath for pulling Haaland's shirt, adding to the sense of chaos.

City had dominated possession early, with Haaland denied by a swift Alisson in the second minute. Liverpool, who struggled for attacking fluency in the first half, were transformed after the break but ultimately paid for defensive lapses late on.

The victory keeps Guardiola's side firmly in the title hunt, while Liverpool slipped to sixth, now 11 points behind City. As Bernardo Silva admitted later, defeat would likely have ended City's hopes — instead, they march on, breathing new life into the race.

# Dembélé stars as PSG crushes bitter rival Marseille 5-0 to regain top spot

**PARIS**

Ballon d'Or winner inspires ruthless PSG display in historic Ligue 1 rout

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé delivered a masterclass with two goals and an assist as Paris Saint-Germain humiliated bitter rival Marseille 5-0, reclaiming top spot in Ligue 1 with their most emphatic victory ever in the storied rivalry.

The dominant win restored PSG's two-point lead over Lens after 21 rounds and pushed Marseille down to fourth place, behind Lyon. Marseille's surprise 1-0 victory over PSG earlier this season already feels like a distant memory.

"We wanted to send a message that we're back," Dembélé said after the match. "It was almost perfect." PSG coach Luis Enrique echoed the sentiment, calling it a historic day for the club's supporters. "It's an important day for our fans because 5-0 against Marseille had never happened before," he said.

Dembélé opened the scoring in the 12th minute, side-footing home a cross from Nuno Mendes after a rapid counterattack. He doubled PSG's lead in the 37th minute, capitalising on a costly defensive error from Marseille captain Leonardo Balerdi, dribbling past him before firing into the roof of the net.

Marseille's night unravelled further after the break. A Facundo Medina own goal extended PSG's lead before Dembélé turned provider, setting up Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for a clinical volley. Substitute Lee Kang-in completed the rout with a composed finish late on.

Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi apologised to fans after another demoralising display, coming less than two weeks after a Champions League exit to Club Brugge. His decision to drop goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli backfired, with replacement Jeffrey de Lange enduring a torrid evening behind a fragile defence.

Top scorer Mason Greenwood and fellow attackers Amine Gouiri and Ethan Nwaneri were largely anonymous, while veteran Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang remained unused on the bench.

Despite early scrutiny after past incidents, PSG fans largely behaved, though referee Willy Delajod briefly halted play following discriminatory chants midway through the second half.

The crushing defeat underlined PSG's authority in Ligue 1 and sent a clear warning to their title rivals as the season enters its decisive phase.

*Mbappe strike seals gritty Madrid win as Atletico lose ground in title race*

# Real Madrid edge Valencia to stay on Barca's tail, Atletico slump

**BARCELONA**

Kylian Mbappe struck late to crown a hard-fought 2-0 victory for Real Madrid at Valencia, keeping the champions firmly on Barcelona's heels at the top of La Liga, while third-placed Atletico Madrid suffered a damaging home defeat to Real Betis.

Mbappe's 23rd league goal of the season ensured Madrid closed the gap on leaders Barcelona to just one point after the Catalans' win over Mallorca a day earlier. Atletico, meanwhile, slipped to a 1-0 loss at the Metropolitano, leaving Diego Simeone's side 13 points adrift of Barca and losing momentum in the title race.

Missing suspended Vinicius Junior and injured Jude Bellingham, Madrid lacked their usual attacking sparkle at Mestalla but showed patience and defensive solidity. After a goalless first half, left-back Alvaro Carreras broke the deadlock midway through the second period, cutting in from the flank and finishing neatly with his weaker right foot.

Valencia pushed for an equaliser and came close when Lucas Beltran struck the post, but Madrid held firm. In stoppage time, Brahim Diaz set up Mbappe for a simple close-range finish to secure all three points.

"It was a game that required patience and focus," said Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa. "We were solid and deserved the win." He reserved special praise for Mbappe, suggesting the French star could one day rival Cristiano Ronaldo's legacy at the club.

Valencia remain 17th, just one point above the relegation zone, with frustrated fans voicing their anger inside Mestalla.

Elsewhere, Atletico Madrid were unable to replicate their midweek Copa del Rey demolition of Betis, falling to a first-half strike from Antony. The Brazilian winger curled home after 28 minutes, giving Betis revenge for Thursday's 5-0 cup loss and boosting their push for a top-four finish.

Atletico thought they had equalised late on through an own goal, but Antoine Griezmann was ruled marginally offside. "We weren't as good as in the cup," admitted captain Koke after a frustrating night.

In other matches, Athletic Bilbao beat Levante 4-2, Sevilla drew 1-1 with Girona, and Getafe won 2-0 at Alaves.

# Lindsey Vonn breaks leg in Winter Olympics downhill crash

**CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (ITALY)**

Lindsey Vonn's courageous bid to win an Olympic downhill title at the age of 41 ended in dramatic fashion after a frightening crash left the American skiing icon with a broken leg during the women's downhill at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Vonn lost control just seconds after leaving the start house, clipping a gate with her right shoulder before tumbling violently down the slope. She came to rest awkwardly on her back, skis tangled beneath her, as her cries echoed across the course and a stunned silence fell over spectators near the finish.

Medical personnel rushed to her aid and treated her on the snow for several minutes before she was strapped to a gurney and airlifted from the course by helicopter — the second such evacuation for Vonn in nine days. She was first taken to a clinic in Cortina d'Ampezzo and later transferred to a hospital in Treviso.

In a statement, Ca' Foncello hospital said Vonn underwent an orthopedic procedure to stabilize a fracture in her left leg and was being treated by a multidisciplinary medical team. The U.S. Ski Team confirmed she was in stable condition.

"She'll be OK, but it's going to be a process," said Anouk Patty, chief of sport for U.S. Ski and Snowboard. "This sport is brutal, and these athletes are throwing themselves down a mountain at incredible speeds."

The crash cast a shadow over an otherwise historic race for the United States, as Breezy Johnson became only the second American woman to win Olympic downhill gold, following Vonn's triumph at the 2010 Vancouver Games. Johnson described the moment as bittersweet, acknowledging the emotional toll of seeing her teammate injured.

Vonn, a four-time overall World Cup champion and widely regarded as one of the greatest skiers of all time, had returned to elite competition after nearly six years away, overcoming multiple knee surgeries to contend once more for Olympic glory.

"This race has been the talk of the Games," said International Ski and Snowboard Federation president Johan Eliasch. "All I can say is thank you for what she has done for our sport."

# US Olympians face backlash, including criticism from Trump

**MILAN**

Several U.S. Olympians competing at the Milan-Cortina Winter Games have found themselves at the center of a political storm after speaking candidly about domestic issues back home, drawing fierce online backlash — including pointed criticism from U.S. President Donald Trump.

The controversy erupted after reporters asked American athletes at a news conference how they felt representing the United States amid heightened immigration enforcement under the Trump administration. Freestyle skier Hunter Hess said he felt conflicted, explaining that wearing the flag did not mean endorsing every government policy.

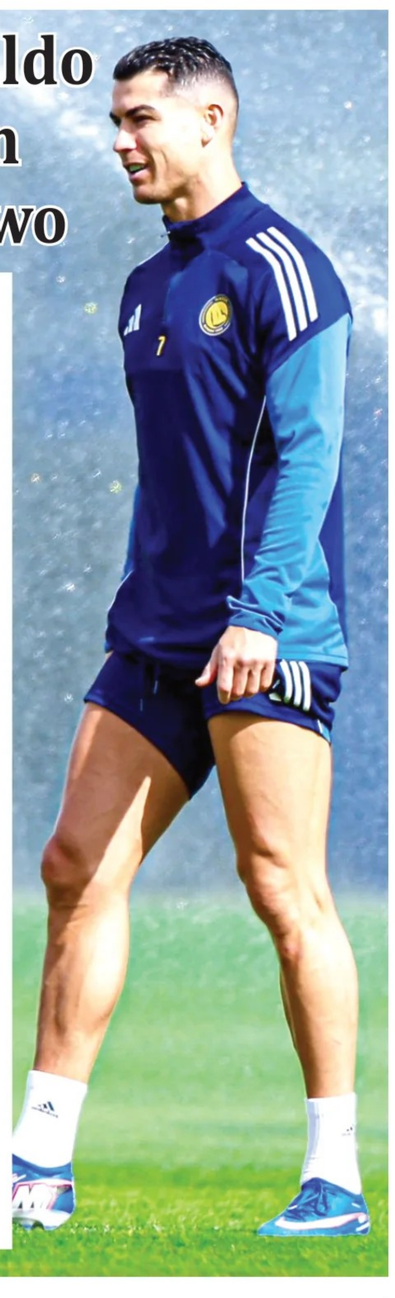
"Just because I'm wearing the flag doesn't mean I represent everything that's going on in the U.S.," Hess said, adding that he was competing on behalf of the people who helped him reach the Olympics.

His remarks quickly ignited criticism on social media. Among those responding was influencer Jake Paul, who wrote on X that athletes unhappy with the country should "go live somewhere else." President Trump amplified the backlash a day later, calling Hess "a real Loser" on his Truth Social platform and saying it was hard to cheer for Olympians who question their country.

Hess was not alone. Freestyle skier Chris Lillis said he was "heartbroken" by immigration policies and urged Americans to focus on respecting everyone's rights. Figure skater Amber Glenn also spoke about challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community during the Trump administration.

The comments prompted a wave of online abuse. Glenn later revealed she had received "a scary amount of hate and threats," forcing her to limit social media use for her mental health.

# Al-Nassr hopeful Ronaldo will return for Asian Champions League Two



**RIYADH**

Al-Nassr are hopeful Cristiano Ronaldo will return to action on Wednesday as the Saudi club bids to move closer to silverware in the Asian Champions League Two, with a quarterfinal place at stake against Arkadag of Turkmenistan.

The 41-year-old Portuguese superstar has yet to win a major trophy since arriving in Saudi Arabia, and his absence from Al-Nassr's last two Saudi Pro League matches has fuelled speculation about his future. Reports suggested Ronaldo was unhappy with the club's funding model, particularly after rivals Al-Hilal strengthened further by signing Karim Benzema in January.

Al-Nassr, along with Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli, are all majority owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, but the Saudi Pro League moved to play down the controversy. In a statement, the SPL stressed that no individual player dictates league-wide decisions.

"The Saudi Pro League is structured around a simple principle: every club operates independently under the same rules," the statement said, while adding that Ronaldo has played an important role in Al-Nassr's growth and ambition since his arrival.

Despite Ronaldo's absence, Al-Nassr showed their strength by beating reigning league champions Al-Ittihad 2-0 on Friday, underlining their depth ahead of the continental clash with Arkadag.

Al-Ittihad's defeat came at a delicate time, with the club still battling for qualification in the top-tier AFC Champions League Elite. They remain the only Saudi side yet to seal a place in the round of 16, although victory over Al-Gharafa of Qatar on Tuesday would secure progression.

# BWF unveils sweeping overhaul to reshape global badminton

**KUALA LUMPUR**

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Monday announced a sweeping restructuring of the global badminton calendar from 2027, unveiling an expanded World Tour, significantly higher prize money and revamped competition formats aimed at accelerating the sport's global growth.

The reforms follow the extension of BWF's long-term agreement with broadcast and commercial partner Infront through to 2034, a move that underpins the federation's ambition to make badminton more visible, commercially attractive and player-centric.

Under the new framework, the number of TV-produced badminton matches will more than double, rising from 1,410 to around 3,000 across all BWF tournaments worldwide. At the heart of the changes is a revamped BWF World Tour featuring 36 tournaments organised into a six-tier structure: the World Tour Finals, five Super 1000 events, five Super 750, nine Super 500, eight Super 300 and eight Super 100 tournaments, with Super 100 events integrated into the main tour for the first time.

The five Super 1000 tournaments, to be staged across Asia and Europe, will feature expanded formats. Singles events will include 48 players competing in a group stage followed by knockouts, while doubles events will have 32-pair knockout draws. Each Super 1000 tournament will run for 11 days across two weekends, with all 1,095 matches broadcast globally.

BWF said the total annual prize pool on the World Tour will increase to approximately USD 26.9 million. Prize money will rise to USD 2 million for Super 1000 events, USD 1.1 million for Super 750, USD 560,000 for Super 500, USD 290,000 for Super 300 and USD 140,000 for Super 100 tournaments.

# Surya's calm leadership has made my life easy: Gambhir

## Gautam Gambhir credits Suryakumar Yadav's composure for easing coaching pressures during T20 World Cup

**NEW DELHI**

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has lauded T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav's calm and player-centric leadership, saying it has significantly eased the pressures of his high-profile role, especially in the shortest format of the game.

Gambhir said India are fortunate to have Suryakumar leading the side in the ongoing T20 World Cup, describing him as a leader who "ticks every box". The clip did not specify when the interaction took place.

"Surya has made my life a lot easier in this format," Gambhir said. "He is a phenomenal leader of men. Not just because of what he does on the field or how he bats, but because of how he relates to players, how he speaks to them and how much time he spends with them."

Gambhir highlighted Suryakumar's relaxed demeanour as a key asset, particularly in high-pressure situations. "He is so calm on the field that, as a coach, you can focus on many other things knowing the atmosphere in the team is under control. That's something any coach can dream of," he added.

India began their World Cup campaign on a winning note on Saturday, defeating the USA after being jolted by an early top-order collapse. Suryakumar played a pivotal role in the recovery, scoring a fluent 84 off 49 balls to steer the team to a competitive total and eventual victory against spirited opposition.

"For me, Surya the player can be kept aside, but Surya the leader has ticked every box," Gambhir said. "His heart is in the right place and he takes the right decisions, especially under pressure." India will face Namibia in their next group match on Thursday. Suryakumar, 35, took over the T20I captaincy weeks after India's World Cup triumph two years ago, following Rohit Sharma's retirement from the format.

# ICC T20 WC 2026: Minnows will have their time under the sun

**Early matches show smaller nations pushing giants, reaffirming T20 cricket's unpredictability worldwide**

**MUMBAI**

The ICC T20 World Cup 2026 is barely three days old, but it has already delivered a sharp reminder of why the shortest format remains the most unforgiving—and entertaining—version of the game. The minnows are not just making up the numbers; they are competing, challenging and, on occasion, pushing the heavyweights to the brink.

Nepal came agonisingly close to pulling off one of the great World Cup upsets, stretching two-time champions England to a tense four-run finish in their Group D clash. A day earlier at the same venue, rank outsiders USA had reigning champions India reeling after a dramatic top-order collapse in a Group A encounter.

Former India captain and coach Rahul Dravid had warned of such scenarios even before the tournament began. While tipping India as favourites, Dravid spoke candidly about the inherent uncertainty of T20 cricket. "It's about the better team on the day. Anybody can play a good knock and upset you," he said at a recent Bengaluru event. "One bad day in the office can undo everything."

That sentiment played out vividly against Nepal, who chased England's 184 for seven with fearless intent, finishing on a remarkable 180 for six. England's Will Jacks admitted his side was "relieved" after the narrow escape, while Nepal captain Nandan Yadav spoke of mixed emotions—pride in competing with an elite side and regret at falling just short. The USA, too, earned plaudits despite a 29-run defeat to India. After reducing the champions to 77 for six, the Associate nation forced skipper Suryakumar Yadav into a rescue act, his unbeaten 84 off 49 balls lifting India to 161 for nine before Mohammed Siraj sealed the win.

History suggests this is no anomaly. From Namibia stunning Sri Lanka in 2022 to USA beating Pakistan in 2024, the T20 World Cup has thrived on such moments. Early signs from the India–Sri Lanka co-hosted 2026 edition suggest the tradition is set to continue, with the minnows ready to enjoy their time under the sun.

*KL Rahul's class and Smaran's fearlessness power K'taka into Ranji semis*

# Fans react as Rahul, Ravichandran chase 325 to knock Mumbai out

**MUMBAI**

Karnataka produced one of the finest run chases in recent Ranji Trophy history as KL Rahul and Smaran Ravichandran led a stunning four-wicket win over Mumbai, chasing down 325 to book a place in the semi-finals of the 2025–26 season. The dramatic victory at the BKC Ground on Monday sparked an outpouring of reactions from fans, who hailed the knock as a reminder of Karnataka's pedigree in India's premier domestic competition.

Social media was flooded with praise for Rahul's composure and authority under pressure, with many calling it a "vintage KL Rahul innings" in a crunch knockout match. Fans also showered admiration on Smaran Ravichandran, celebrating the youngster's fearless strokeplay against an experienced Mumbai attack in hostile conditions.

The quarter-final had swung wildly over four days. Karnataka seized early control when Prasidh Krishna and Vidwath Kaverappa ripped through Mumbai for 120 in the first innings, before Shreyas Gopal cleaned up the tail. Mumbai, however, fought back hard. Mayank Agarwal's gritty 92 helped Karnataka secure only a modest 53-run lead, keeping the contest finely balanced.

Mumbai then flipped the script in their second innings. Contributions from Musheer Khan, Akash Anand and Tanush Kotian powered the defending champions to 377, setting Karnataka a daunting target of 325 in the final innings — a chase few gave them a chance to complete.

What followed left fans stunned. After an early setback, Rahul produced a masterclass, scoring a sublime 130 to register his 24th first-class century. At the other end, Smaran Ravichandran played with maturity beyond his years, counter-attacking when required and easing the pressure on the senior batter.

Their 147-run partnership broke Mumbai's resistance and silenced the home crowd.

# USA, Pak eye improvements with bat in another T20 WC showdown

**COLOMBO**

Pakistan and the USA will look to address their batting inconsistencies when they meet in a much-anticipated T20 World Cup clash in Colombo on Tuesday, a fixture still coloured by memories of a dramatic upset 20 months ago.

On their World Cup debut in 2024, the USA stunned Pakistan, a result that continues to linger for the men in green. This encounter offers Pakistan an opportunity for redemption, while the Americans, coming off a defeat to India in their 2026 opener, will be eager to show that their earlier triumph was no accident.

Pakistan arrive with concerns despite a win over the Netherlands. Chasing 148, they cruised early before a sudden middle-order collapse nearly derailed them, only for Faheem Ashraf to steer the side home. Captain Salman Ali Agha admitted his team struggled to manage pressure once wickets fell and stressed the need for set batters to finish innings. Agha himself will be under scrutiny after promoting his position in the order. Attention will also be on Babar Azam's return to the T20 setup and opener Saim Ayub, whose recent contributions have been stronger with the ball than the bat.

The USA impressed with the ball against India but faltered in the powerplay with the bat.

# Davis Cup qualifiers: India's Dhakshineswar Suresh seals epic win over Dutch

**BENGALURU**

India rode on the grit and brilliance of Dhakshineswar Suresh to clinch a memorable 3-2 victory over the Netherlands in the Davis Cup Qualifiers Round 1 tie at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium, sealing a place in the next round scheduled for September.

After nearly eight hours of intense tennis spread across two days, the contest came down to the final reverse singles rubber with the tie locked at 2-2. Rising to the occasion once again, the 25-year-old from Madurai held his nerve to defeat Guy Den Ouden 6-4, 7-6 (4), sparking wild celebrations among players and fans alike.

Dhakshineswar had already played a pivotal role earlier in the tie. With India trailing 0-1 after the opening singles on Day 1, he replaced Sriram Balaji to partner Yuki Bhambri in the doubles rubber. The pair produced a stirring performance, edging past David Pel and Sander Arends 7-6 (0), 3-6, 7-6 (1) in a three-hour battle to level the tie at 1-1.

India briefly took the lead on the final day when Sumit Nagal showed admirable intent in the first reverse singles, winning the opening set against Jesper De Jong. However, the Dutchman fought back strongly to prevail 5-7, 6-1, 6-4, forcing the tie into a decider. Once again, the spotlight fell on Dhakshineswar. Displaying composure beyond his years, he combined solid serving with sharp net play to keep Den Ouden under constant pressure. The second set tie-break proved decisive, with the Indian winning key points to close out the match and the tie.

The victory marks one of India's most dramatic Davis Cup wins in recent years and underlines the emergence of Dhakshineswar as a key figure in the national setup. Lifted on the shoulders of his teammates after the final point, the normally reserved youngster soaked in the moment, having single-handedly propelled India into the next round.

# Indian Racing Festival: Street racing is about resilience, says Kichcha Sudeep

**BENGALURU**

As the streets of Goa prepare to transform into a high-octane racing arena for the Indian Racing Festival (IRF) on February 14 and 15, Kannada star and Kings Bengaluru owner Kichcha Sudeep says street racing is the ultimate test of resilience, instinct and composure — qualities he believes define his team.

The newly built Goa Street Circuit will make its debut as it hosts Round 4 of the 2025 Indian Racing League, presenting drivers with an unforgiving layout and no historical data to lean on. For Sudeep, that unpredictability is precisely what sets street racing apart.

"On a permanent circuit, everything is controlled. A street race changes the mindset completely," Sudeep said. "Here, it's no longer about perfection; it's about resilience. The city comes alive around you, and the team has to rise with it."

He believes street racing brings motorsport closer to the public, transforming it into a shared urban spectacle. "It brings the sport out of closed circuits and into the heart of the city. The energy of the people keeps the team alert and sharp every second," he added.

Preparation for Goa has required adaptability rather than routine. "This circuit is about mastering the unknown. We're trusting our drivers' instincts, discipline and experience. Precision and control will matter more than outright speed," Sudeep said.

Leading Kings Bengaluru is French racer Sachel Rotge, the 2025 F4 India Vice Champion, alongside Ruhaan Alva, the youngest race winner in Indian Racing League history, who continues to impress on international podiums. The squad is further strengthened by karting vice world champion Kyle Kumaran and British racer Jem Hepworth, a podium finisher in the McLaren Trophy.

"Street circuits are unforgiving. One small mistake can cost everything," Sudeep said. "Drivers must respect the walls but never fear them. That balance is where races are won." As Kings Bengaluru head to Goa, Sudeep believes they carry the spirit of the city with them — resilient, ambitious and ready to take on the unknown.

# Italy captain Wayne Madsen suffers shoulder dislocation

Italy rocked as skipper Wayne Madsen injured while fielding in opener

**KOLKATA**

Italy's T20 World Cup campaign suffered a major blow after captain Wayne Madsen dislocated his shoulder while fielding during their opening group match against Scotland at the Eden Gardens.

The 42-year-old sustained the injury in the fourth over of Scotland's innings when he attempted a diving stop at mid-wicket on the practice pitches adjacent to the main square. Madsen landed awkwardly on his left side and was immediately seen clutching his arm in visible discomfort. After receiving on-field attention from the medical staff, he walked off the ground with his left arm placed in a makeshift sling.

Broadcast commentators later confirmed that Madsen would take no further part in the match. In addition to the shoulder dislocation, he is set to undergo further medical evaluations, including assessments for concussion and a possible neck injury, adding to Italy's concerns.

The injury comes at a particularly inopportune moment for Italy, who were looking to make a strong start in a competitive group. Madsen is a pivotal figure in the side, not only as captain but also as a senior batter whose experience anchors the middle order. His absence was immediately felt as Italy were forced to reshuffle both their fielding setup and leadership responsibilities mid-match.

Team officials said more clarity on the extent of the injury and Madsen's availability for the remainder of the tournament would emerge after detailed medical scans. A prolonged absence could significantly dent Italy's hopes, given the limited depth in leadership and experience within the squad.

Madsen, who has been a driving force behind Italy's rise in associate cricket, has featured prominently in recent qualification campaigns and remains one of the oldest players in the competition. His fitness will now be closely monitored as Italy await updates ahead of their upcoming fixtures.

**City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd.,** No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.